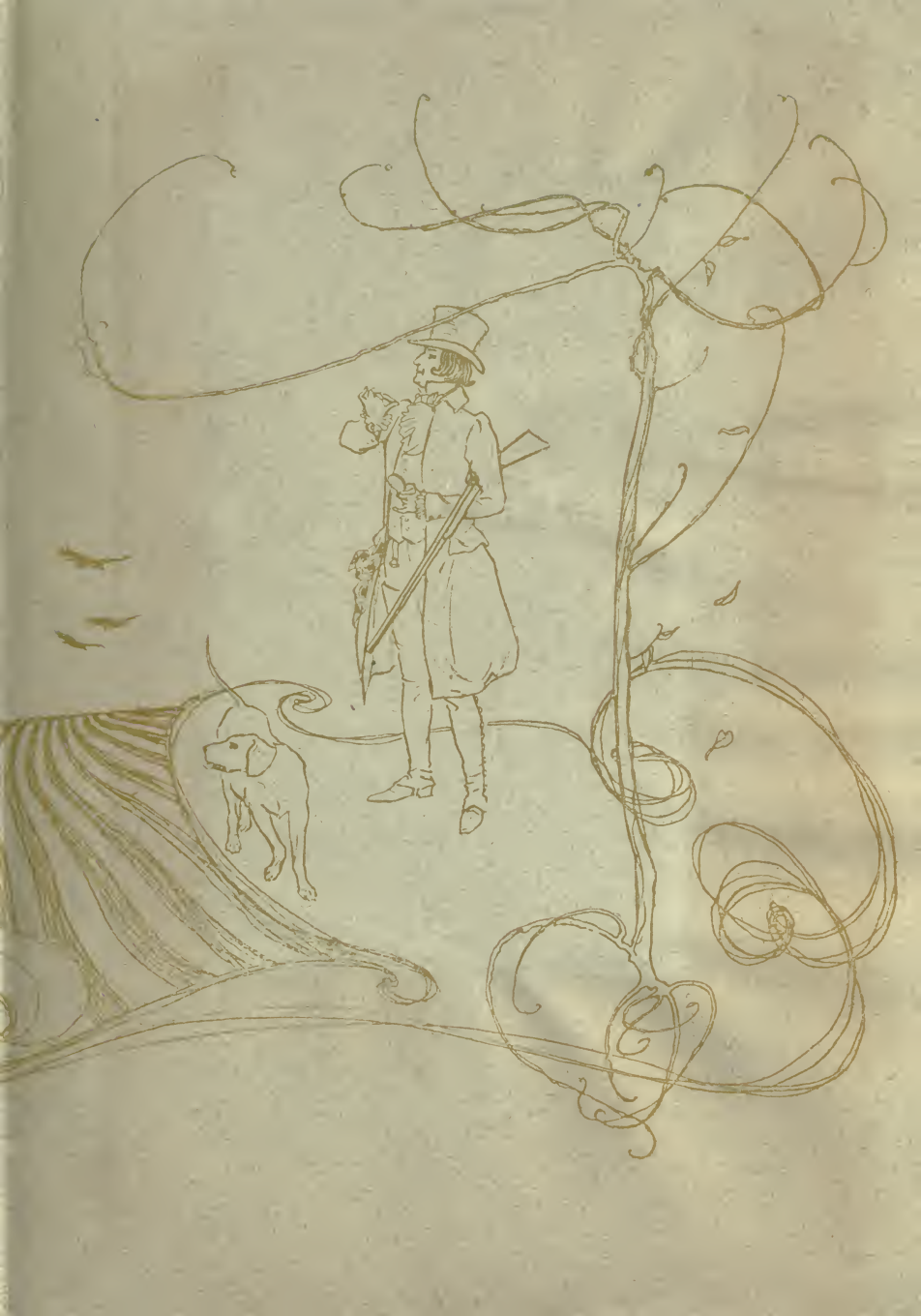
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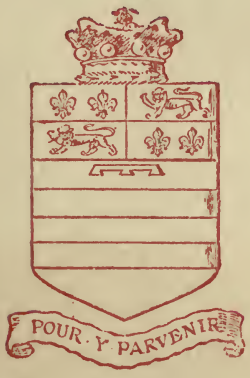
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Tom Firr
late huntsman to Quorn.

HUNTING

BY

J. OTHO PAGET



LONDON
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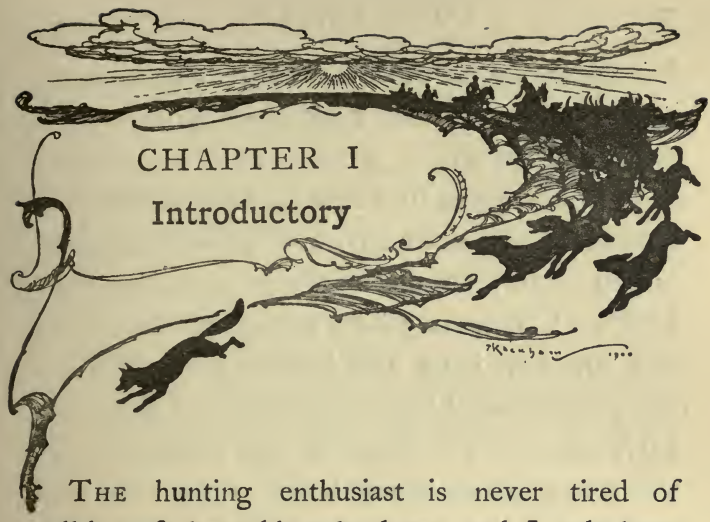
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HUNTING



CHAPTER I

Introductory

The hunting enthusiast is never tired of talking of the subject he loves, and I only hope the reader may not grow weary of reading long before I have finished my book. The honour the editors of the Haddon Hall Library have done me in seeking my co-operation I thoroughly appreciate, and I trust they will not be very disappointed with the result. They have told me I need not be bound by the precedents of past publications, and am not to be too severely technical; so that I intend to ramble on from one point to another in the light manner of those engaged in a smoking-room discussion. You must please remember that this volume does not pretend to be a complete text-book on hunting,

but at the same time I hope to convey some useful information to those who are not past masters of the art.

I am not going to travel the beaten track and repeat the well-worn advice of previous writers: if you want their opinions you must buy their books. I write as things appear to me, giving you my own ideas and impressions. When I disagree with well-known authorities, I shall probably be in the wrong, but you must give me the credit for an honest belief in my own convictions. I do not mean to infer that I am starting an entirely new set of theories on hunting, but what I write herein will be the outcome of my own observation and reflection; accepted views will only be set down where they coincide with my opinions. Not that I wish to constitute myself an authority on hunting; but I venture to think that a book claiming to be an original work should not be a crib from previous writers on the subject. If you do not agree with me on every point, I must beg you to be tolerant of a very ordinary mortal, who is liable to err and who may often look at things in the wrong light. I give you my ideas and opinions for what they

are worth, but you must understand that I fully appreciate my fallibility and power of making mistakes. Doctors differ, and the shining lights of the hunting world often disagree on important questions, so that I can hardly expect to wade into these disputed waters without stirring up some mud and laying myself open to hostile criticism.

When man first entered into partnership with the dog to pursue other animals will never now be accurately known, but there is no doubt that our prehistoric ancestors hunted something in their own peculiar fashion. Coming down to a more recent date, we read of Xenophon hunting the hare, but this ancient history is neither entertaining nor instructive. In 1781, Peter Beckford published his *Thoughts on Hunting*, and that book remains a standard work to this day. Before Beckford, Somerville wrote a poem called 'The Chase,' and there were a few other treatises on hunting prior to that time, but they contain nothing which is applicable to the sport as it is known to-day. Those who wish to learn something of the art of hunting will find Beckford a most delightful book, which every sportsman should have in his library.

The word 'sport' now is made to cover a multitude of things, which to my mind should be classed under another name. Hunting the carted stag and the drag may be pleasant and harmless amusements, but they are not sport; and the same may be said of a bagged fox. To further illustrate my meaning, I should say it is sport to hunt the rat with terriers on his own ground, but to first catch that animal and then turn him out before dogs is *not* sport. Shooting pigeons from a trap is certainly not sport, but it is a very nice point where the line should be drawn in shooting pheasants that only the evening before have fed from the keeper's hand. Of course it is only the feeling and the idea, but if once a man shoots for any other reason than the love of sport, he loses more than half the pleasure, and is no longer a sportsman. A little competition certainly enhances the pleasure of all sport, but too much may destroy the real thing altogether. They who hunt solely for the pleasure of a ride should devote themselves to drag-hunting, and they who shoot to exhibit their skill, should find as much satisfaction in shooting pigeons as any wild game.

One often hears the expression 'outdoor sports,' and I always wonder what kind of sport it is that can be enjoyed indoors. My idea of sport is pursuing a wild beast or bird in the open air, and in the country where the object of pursuit has been bred. You may think this rather a narrow-minded view, but that is how it appears to me. The man who had a thousand pheasants down from Leadenhall market, and turning them out of his attic-windows, shot them as they rocketed over high elm-trees, may have had some very pretty shooting, but I do not think any one could call it sport. I have never done any hawking, but that I should certainly call sport. Nearly all forms of fishing also deserve the name, whether it be the higher art with the fly or the humble angling for coarse fish in a sluggish river. The pleasures of both shooting and fishing are very considerably enhanced when your bag or basket is meant for the pot. 'Pot-hunter' is generally used as a term of reproach, and yet I think the pot should be the ultimate end you ought always to have in view. Suppose yourself in the Rockies or some other wild place, a hundred miles from the nearest butcher, and the camp is in want of

fresh meat. In that case the successful stalk of a fat buck will fill your heart with happiness, and however tough the venison may be, you prefer it to the tenderest beef-steak that London could produce. Of course you would try for the best head, even though you knew the yearling would be better eating, but your pleasure in shooting the monarch of the herd would be more than half spoilt had you to leave his carcass to the coyotes. It is not a question of stomach, for it is quite as satisfactory if what you shoot can be given to some one who will appreciate it. You really want to bag your game, and if that can't be done, you feel you would rather not have shot it. Dogs are in sympathy with us in our sporting aims, and they too have this curious desire to bag the animal or bird that has been shot. The disgust of a pointer or setter is quite painful to behold when the game he has found is repeatedly missed. In further illustration of this trait in dogs, I must tell you a little story of a fox-terrier I had with me out in Western America. For the first month he was out there he wore himself to a shadow, and very nearly broke his heart, in vain attempts to catch a prairie-

dog. This little animal, as you probably know, is not a dog, but something between a rat and a rabbit. He has an aggravating way of sitting on his haunches at the edge of his burrow out on the open prairie, making a shrill squeaking noise that immediately arouses the sporting instincts of a well-bred terrier. He will wait until the terrier is within a yard or two, and then disappear underground. These prairie-dog colonies or towns, as they are called, sometimes cover three or four acres, and over each burrow the owner sits and pipes a defiant squeak. The terrier races from one burrow to another, and the cunning little brutes remain squeaking to the last second before they disappear. 'Tramp' would run after them all day under a broiling sun until he was completely exhausted, and then, if we passed another dog-town, he would turn his head the other way and pretend not to see or hear them. 'Tramp' was, however, a dog of great intelligence, and finding the straightforward plan useless, he decided to try stratagem. One day, as we rode over the prairie, I noticed 'Tramp,' instead of making his usual rush after his enemies, was adopting feline tactics, and in a crouching position was crawling

stealthily upon them. The impertinent little prairie-dog squeaked away merrily as usual, and fate crept silently on him from behind. Nearer and nearer crawled 'Tramp,' making no more noise than a cat, and then, when within a yard or two, he made one spring and grabbed his prey by the back. Of course I was delighted with my companion's cleverness and made a great fuss with him, but I never saw a dog more pleased and satisfied with himself. I thought the episode finished, and, having no use for the carcass, rode on and left it behind. A mile or two further on I looked back and found 'Tramp' was carrying the prairie-dog's body, which must have weighed at least four or five pounds, though there was a scorching sun and we had travelled some distance. When I told him to leave it and come on he put it down, but picked it up again when I went forward. Then I knew that he wanted me to carry his spoil, and though it is an evil-smelling creature, I was obliged to fasten it to the saddle, but was well repaid for my trouble in seeing his delight. I had to carry that body for two days. The terrier did not want to eat the animal, and all he wanted was to see the game bagged that he

had been at such trouble to catch. This, I am afraid, is rather a long story, but it helps to prove that dogs enjoy with us the feeling that bagging the game is quite as much a part of the sport as catching or killing. In hunting a fox we have an animal that is useless to eat, but in all hunting with hounds we think as much of our partner the dog as we do ourselves, and if a pack of hounds refused to eat their fox, we should feel that our joint labours had been wasted. Of course it is not easy to compare hunting with shooting, because the methods of following the two sports are entirely different; but the huntsman is only satisfied when his hounds have the fox inside them, and the shooter is not happy until his pheasant has been picked up. Good sportsmen, whether of the hound, the rod, or the gun, are all near akin and are all inspired by the same feeling. It is the half-hearted, shoddy sportsmen who disgrace whatever sport they take up.

I am afraid I have been led away from my legitimate subject, and in discussing shooting I am trespassing on ground that will, I expect, have a volume to itself in this series. In America they classify all shooting under the head of hunting,

and that must be my excuse for having referred to the gun. Between the man who shoots and the man who hunts there is, I regret to say, very often a great deal of jealousy and unpleasantness. Sport should be a common bond of sympathy between them, and if they would only extend a little consideration towards each other's particular amusement, they might for ever be the best of friends. I am not going to draw any comparison between the two forms of sport, because it would be manifestly unfair: being a staunch advocate of one side, I could hardly be expected to hold the scales of justice impartially. Those who both hunt and shoot we are not in any way concerned with; but those with large game-preserves, who never ride to hounds, we ought always to consider, lest the pursuit of our pleasure should cause them annoyance. A tactless master or some officious member of the hunt stupidly tells a covert-owner that his keepers kill the foxes, and then there arises a quarrel that will upset the whole neighbourhood. It is very probably true that the keepers have killed foxes, but the man who brings the accusation has no evidence to show, and no one likes to have his servants

found fault with by others on mere assumption. Of course, if it were possible to bring proof of vulpicide against the keepers, the matter should be laid before the men's employer, but it must always be a very delicate business to approach, and should be done in a conciliatory, not an aggressive spirit. The man who rears a large stock of pheasants and also hunts, ought always to make it his business to see that the foxes in his coverts are never interfered with. I can sympathise with the man who does not hunt and thinks his sport is being injured by the foxes ; but the selfish fellow who hunts in one country and allows his keepers to slay foxes in another, is an individual who can only be described by words that are not to be found in a dictionary. Social ostracism is the least punishment that should be meted out to him, and his offence should be cried from the house-tops. I am thankful to say, however, that few instances of such disgusting selfishness occur ; but whenever the charge can be fully proved, I think it is the duty of the master, whose hunt the man patronises, to request him not to follow his hounds.

The brotherhood of sport should be a link

to make men tolerant of each other and bind them together in a union for the common good. The keen fox-hunter will tell you that there is no sport to compare with fox-hunting, and, personally, I agree with him ; but we must not quarrel with others because they do not think with us on this point. I suppose it is a question of taste and nature, that has not made us all alike. In following that which seems to us best, we ought always to consider whether we are likely to injure the prospects of those who seek enjoyment in some other direction. Some men prefer shooting, and others like hunting, the hare ; but though their interests may occasionally clash with fox-hunting, we must remember they are good sportsmen and have a right to amuse themselves in their own way.

Love of hunting is one of the strongest features in the character of the human race, and must have been transmitted to us by some remote ancestor. This love is not, however, inherited by all alike : in some it is entirely absent, others only have it in a mild form, whilst a few are so thoroughly impregnated with it that it becomes the ruling passion of life. There must be many men who

possess this curious instinct strongly, but who are condemned through circumstances to an office stool, and never see a hound all their lives. Denied its legitimate outlet, this hidden force finds a vent usually in lavishing affection on dogs and other animals. The instinct is occasionally inherited by certain families, but as a rule it is very wayward, cropping up in the character of individuals by whose breeding one would least expect it, and being entirely absent in the descendants of men who have possessed it fully. One brother may be an ardent hunter, and the other may hate the sight of a hound. Love of hunting is not often seen side by side with that commercial spirit which lays up for itself the riches of this world, though of course there may be exceptions to this as to every other rule. The man whose chief centre of interest is hunting and hounds will very seldom find time for the making of money. There will always be found plenty of sneaking Jacobs to take advantage of the easy-going, sport-loving Esaus of this life.

The cry of hounds appeals to something within us that we cannot define, and our first impulse is to follow. If we do not possess a horse, we

follow on foot as fast and as far as we can; but we cannot explain why the music of the pack has suddenly created this mad desire. When hounds run through a village, it is a common sight to see the whole population, young men and maidens, old men and boys, all turn out, and with one accord commence to run. They know they will be left behind in the first field, but they never stop to think of that, and only blindly obey the dictates of the impulse which urges them on. My only explanation for this is that hunting is the natural recreation of man, as it is the best means of procuring fresh air and exercise. I am very glad to see that in this, the latter part of the century, the nation has awakened to the necessity of bodily exercise: what with bicycles and games, there are very few young men nowadays who do not get a chance of exerting some of their muscles every day. Formerly, when a boy left school or college, he took to the business of life without ever thinking of his body, and thereupon commenced to lay on a tissue of fat that made him an old man at forty. It is not, however, the health of the man to-day of which I am thinking, so much as that of future generations. The body

cannot be healthy without exercise, and unless a man is healthy, he cannot have healthy children. However devoted a man is to books and brain-work, he should not neglect to work his muscles, and he may be certain his brain will be all the clearer for bodily exertion. Why is it that so many clever men beget fools? The reason is, I believe, that having allowed brain-work to absorb all their time to the detriment of their physical powers, they are unable to transmit a healthy vitality to their children. Of course the same may be said of the muscular man who never uses his brain; but he, at any rate, will get healthy children, and the brain-power will not be lost, only hid beneath a thicker covering. There is no better or pleasanter form of exercise than riding to fox-hounds or running to foot-beagles: do one or other, but do both if you can. Forgive me for thus launching out and laying down the law, but exercise has ever been my hobby. The breeding of hounds and other animals has been the study of my life, which makes me take an interest in the breeding of the human race. I suppose the main object of recreation is exercise; but what is of nearly as much importance is that

the sport or game should possess sufficient interest to crowd out every other thought from the mind. Dwelling too long on one subject is bad for the brain. There is nothing to make you forget the troubles and worries of life that can compare with hunting. You may start out in the morning after reading a sheaf of unpleasant letters, feeling bothered and worried; but as you near the meet your black reflections gradually fade away, and by the time the fox is found, they have completely disappeared. Then you return at night, weary in body perhaps, but with a brain refreshed, and can tackle with ease the problems which appeared in the morning to overwhelm you. The glorious uncertainty of hunting is one of its greatest charms. You never know what the day will bring forth, for what may appear to you a most unlikely morning for scent may turn out the best day of the season. A good fox may be found where previous experience has led you to expect foxes to be short-running. You get a good start from the covert, and the horse you had thought before only a moderate hunter carries you brilliantly.

It is never safe to predict anything that refers

to hunting, and it is always the unexpected that comes to pass. Those who are connected with the hounds have a special interest which the ordinary follower lacks, and the latter sometimes feels the proceedings to be tame; but the master or huntsman, however bad the scent, has the pleasure of watching the working of individual hounds. In countries which are called fashionable it would be impossible for a large field to ride near enough the pack to watch what each hound was doing, and therefore it can be easily understood that slow hunts are not very popular. I have often heard it said by those who affect a knowledge of the sport, that only about a third of those who go out hunting care for anything except the riding. This may be true in a measure, and yet it is not altogether true. It is not a matter that is capable of proof; but I believe that ninety per cent. of those who go out are chiefly influenced by a love of the sport. They may be ignorant and uneducated in the mysteries of the art, and therefore unable to fully appreciate some things, but the love of hunting is there, and only requires developing. Some men have that love and do not know it: it is hid below the surface, and only

a chance circumstance brings it out. They thoroughly enjoy a run, and think the pleasure they experience is due entirely to the riding over fences; but if that were the case they might as well ride to a drag. How few people who have the opportunity of following fox-hounds ever patronise a drag-hunt, and yet the red herring or the aniseed will always ensure a good scent. If good sportsmen were as scarce as alleged, you might well imagine there would be many more packs following the drag than pursuing the fox. There are probably very few men who ride to drag-hounds for choice, and I think they look on it merely as a substitute for the real thing, which circumstances make it impossible for them to enjoy. It is not a legitimate sport at all, and is only a base imitation; but it serves as a reminder of fox-hunting, and as a means of schooling a hunter.

My idea is that the bump of hunting is not wanting in the crowd, but that the principles and methods of the sport were not instilled in early youth. Consequently the points of interest which appeal to those who know something are entirely lost on the others. It is for this reason that I

would advise a young man, commencing his hunting career, to acquire a knowledge of the working of hounds, and to put himself in sympathy with the aims of the huntsman. Let him forget all about the riding and the fences, thinking only of the ultimate capture of the fox and the means the hounds employ to attain that end. He will by doing this get far greater pleasure out of a run, and will enjoy the riding none the less.

One of the best features of hunting is that it gives all classes a chance of meeting on terms of practical equality. In the hunting-field all men are equal, with the exception of the master and the huntsman — they should be absolute autocrats. The peer must take a back seat if the butcher with a bold heart can pound him over a big fence. A man's social status is defined by the position he holds when hounds run: if he can get into the front rank of a good run and stay there, he has proved himself the superior of those who are behind. A bad start or loss of nerve is, however, liable to reverse the order of things at any minute, and no one can tell when he may be shorn of all his honours, so that there

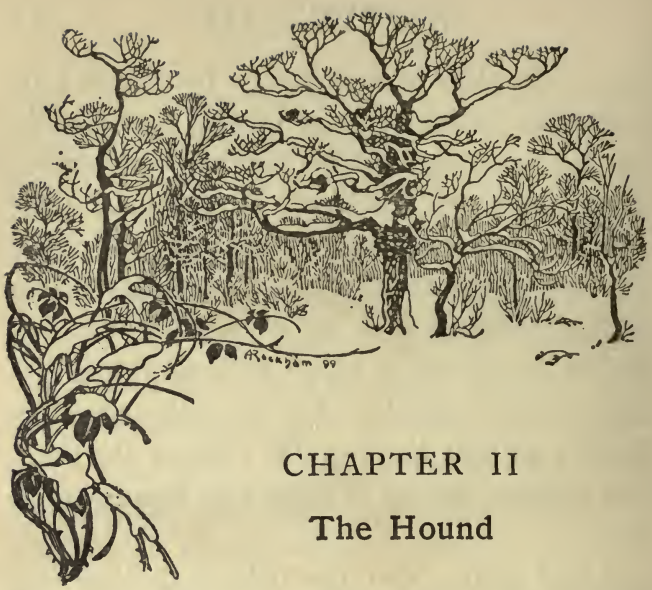
can be no room for pride or arrogance. Probably most men have a very fair opinion of their prowess, but fortunately they keep that opinion to themselves. When we reach the stage at which our discretion exceeds our valour, we look upon those who are bolder than ourselves as foolhardy and ignorant, but we are forced to admit that they beat us for the place we all covet. When we go a-hunting, I think we should forget all the petty squabbles with our neighbours, and meet for the time on terms of cordiality. Anything approaching a quarrel will spoil the day's sport for you. Every one should try to be genial and good-tempered, so that even if there is only a moderate run, you return home feeling happier for the exercise and the good fellowship. There are many things to try one's temper in the hunting-field, when everybody is excited, but one should control one's feelings and be invariably courteous in speech. You should apologise even when you think you are in the right, for the other man may be equally certain he is in the right, and it would be difficult to say who was in the wrong. At the same time, when a man apologises and is evidently sorry, you ought to

accept his apologies in a kindly spirit, even though he has jumped on to the small of your back. If a man bangs up against you in a gateway, and at once expresses his sorrow, you should smother the d——n that rises to your lips from the pain of a crushed leg. Because a man behaves like a cad, there is no reason why you should forget to be a gentleman. In the rough-and-tumble which generally ensues when a large field is trying to get a good start, some little accident is certain to happen, but the fault is more the eagerness of the crowd than the individual who is the apparent direct cause. Curses and harsh words always seem to me out of place in the hunting-field, where every one should be jolly and bent on enjoyment. An angry word will blight the pleasure of a sensitive man for the rest of the day, and those who are thick-skinned should remember this. Of course, an actual row in the field is the very worst form, and is an insult to the master, for those things always find their way into the papers and get hunting a bad name. If two men feel that they must express their opinions of each other in strong language, let them retire to a distance out of sight and hearing

of the field, then, when they have exhausted their vocabulary without satisfying their combativeness, they can dismount and use nature's weapons, when no one will be the wiser. I think also we should be especially tolerant of the mistakes and sins of the man who appears in the hunting-field for the first time. He is ignorant of all the unwritten laws which govern our behaviour, and when he commits a fault, he does it because he knows no better. If you see him steering wildly down for the place you had selected, pull on one side and let him go, for you may be certain he will not trouble you long, but will be reposing happily at the bottom of a ditch before hounds have run five minutes. Do not, however, spoil the poor man's short-lived pleasure by swearing at him, but rather take some other opportunity of explaining to him quietly the laws which he has transgressed. The lady novice comes in for her share of blame, and though she may not get sworn at, black looks will soon explain the situation. For her also I would crave indulgence, and if she becomes a regular offender, you can ask her male friends to tell her in what way she is doing wrong. In whatever way we may

treat them, there is no excuse for the novice, male or female, embarking on a hunting career, without having ascertained the customs and observances which are considered necessary by those who have had considerable experience. If people like to endanger their own lives and their relations do not interfere, it is no concern of ours, but we do very strongly object to their risking the lives of other people. Any one who comes out hunting without knowing the rules of the game, is a constant source of danger to those who are near.

I feel certain that the opinions I have here expressed concerning the manners of the hunting-field will coincide with those of men older than myself, but I must apologise for having somewhat arbitrarily laid down the law.



CHAPTER II

The Hound

WITHOUT wishing to detract from the merits of any other form of hunting, I must give precedence to the chase of the fox. Not because it is the most popular—though of that I suppose there is no doubt—but because it ranks the highest in my estimation, and I consider it all round to be the finest sport in the world. I will not even pretend that I think the question admits of any argument, for to me fox-hunting is first and everything else is second. Here I stand confessed at the beginning of the chapter, and if you do not approve of my sentiments,



George Gillson.

late huntsman to Cottesmore.

I advise you to close the book now before your mind becomes poisoned. There is something wildly exciting in the hunt of a fox, that is quite unknown to a hare-hunter. What it is I don't pretend to say. There is such a varmint sporting look about the animal, that the mere sight of him sends a thrill down your spine. Now, the hare does not have this effect on you, and you feel inclined to pity her, whereas the fox seems so well able to take care of himself, we never think of pitying him. Besides, it seems the natural justice of Providence that a fox should be hunted, for he lives by hunting other animals, and should therefore die by the same means.

The history of fox-hunting is comparatively modern, at least in the sense which we know it now. One Thomas Fownes, a former owner of Beckford's home, was, I believe, the first man who kept a pack exclusively for hunting the fox, which would be somewhere about the beginning of the eighteenth century. His pack was sold to a Mr. Bowes in Yorkshire, and I imagine there are few kennels that do not owe something to this breeder, though all direct trace is lost of his hounds. By the middle of the century the

movement had spread, and there were several packs then kept solely for fox-hunting. The Belvoir and the Brocklesby were fashioning the material they already had in their kennels, whilst Maynell and Beckford were building up packs from different sources with science and judgment. When we read how it was possible to get together in a very few years an excellent pack of fox-hounds, one marvels how it was done and where the material came from. Though no hound had been devoted solely to the fox and no regular packs were in existence as they are now, nearly every nobleman and landed proprietor kept what were called buck-hounds, with which they hunted deer, hare, fox, marten-cat, and anything that would show sport. Each owner of hounds went a-hunting whenever it pleased himself and guests. At Belvoir, Badminton, and other large houses, those buck-hounds had probably been bred with care for a great many years, and were handed down to successive generations as family heirlooms, but as they were not confined to hunting one particular animal, the object for which they were to be bred was not very clearly defined. The consequence of this was that the individual who had

charge of the kennel bred the hounds in the direction to which his own tastes pointed : thus one preferred the deer, another the fox, and a third the timid hare. At the beginning of the eighteenth century there were four distinct types of hounds that still retained their own individual characteristics. Each kind of hound owed something to the other for a certain excellence, and there is no doubt they were occasionally crossed in the hope of grafting on some good quality. In spite of this crossing of the breeds we can trace the virtues and vices of each sort in its descendants to-day.

The buck-hound resembled the fox-hound as we know him now, and like him was able to adapt himself to hunting any description of animal, but always excelled in the pursuit of vermin. There are few packs of otter-hounds that do not include at least three or four couple of draft fox-hounds, and once entered they impart a spirit into the hunt which seals the death of many an otter. Two hundred years ago the buck-hound was the best all-round for hunting, and therefore more attention was paid to his breeding, the result being the fox-hound, which

to-day is the most perfect animal of the dog species in existence. Pay a visit to the annual show at Peterboro', and if you have not ever seen a hound before, you will be struck at once with the symmetry and strength of the exhibits; but you must then remember, in the breeding of the animal before you, looks have only been a secondary consideration, so that you can appreciate the trouble that has been expended in bringing the hound to its present perfection.

Besides the buck-hound there was the southern-hound, the fox-beagle, and the little blue-mottled beagle. The southern-hound had been bred for nose and nose alone, so that in time he became an animal of very keen scenting powers, but of hideous proportion, and is now practically extinct. The blood-hound is undoubtedly a very near relation, and the American fox-hound that still hunts the fox in Kentucky is probably descended from southern-hounds which accompanied the pilgrims in the *Mayflower*. The old southerner had his good points, amongst which were voice and nose, but he lacked dash and drive; still, his was the blood that helped to make the fox-hound, and he therefore deserves

honourable mention. The southern-hound was chiefly used for hunting deer and hare, but I doubt his capacity for catching a deer unless he had a mixture of buck-hound blood in his veins. Long ears that swept the ground and a deep bell-like note were his chief features. With five or six couple of these hounds our ancestors were wont to hunt the hare in early morning, but in spite of being slow for fox or deer, they were too fast for the hare, and were therefore crossed with the little fox-beagle to decrease the size. The result of this cross was the harrier, but this breed has again been crossed of late years with the fox-hound, and there is very little of the old harrier left. There are still two packs in existence which are called old English harriers, but I doubt the antiquity of the breed as a separate one, and believe they owe their origin to a mixture of the southern-hound and the mottled beagle. They are ungainly animals, standing usually over twenty-four inches, inclined to babble and tie on the line, but with excellent noses and good tone. The fox-beagle, or northern-beagle, was a small edition of the fox-hound in disposition, full of fire and dash, but lacking substance.

His head was what we should call 'snipy,' and he was decidedly on the leg. Crossed with the terriers of the period used for bolting foxes, which were either black-and-tan or red, the fox-terrier as we know him now was eventually evolved. The foot-beagle of the present day also owes many of his good qualities to this ancestor, and it is the dash that he has transmitted to his descendants which now enables a pack of twelve-inch hounds to pursue a hare to death. Amidst Yorkshire dales and Cumberland fells the fox-beagle was used for tracking the fox to his earth by shepherds and farmers, who followed the chase on foot, and who rejoiced in a kill, as much for the sport as for the safety of lamb-fold or hen-roost.

The author of *An Essay on Hunting*, published in 1733, says 'the north-country beagle is nimble and vigorous, and does his business as furiously as Jehu himself can wish him.' The same writer then tells us, 'there is yet another sort in great favour with small gentry, because they eat but little. These, as their noses are very tender and not far from the ground, I have often seen to make tolerable sport; but without great care they

are flirting and maggoty, and very apt to chant and chatter on any or on occasion.' The old dictionaries give us capricious and whimsical as the meaning of 'maggoty': then, if we translate 'flirting' to be unsteady, uncertain, or not to be depended on, we get a very fair idea of the vices of this sort of hound. Many beagles of the present day inherit these faults, together with the tender nose. Years ago some breeder pardoned a babbling brute for the sake of its scenting powers, and that mistake has not yet been eradicated.

In attempting to sketch an outline of the fox-hound's origin, I have been led to speak of the breed of hound in general; but though, as I have already stated, the blood of the buck-hound preponderates, all the other breeds have contributed something towards making that animal of which we are so justly proud. The fox-hound is a composite production, which has had its good qualities confirmed and established by generations of careful breeding.

The man who did most for hound-breeding in this century was Mr. Osbaldeston, and most packs are proud now to be able to show a pedigree that

traces back to one of his strain. This brings us within the radius of the fox-hound stud-book, which work I recommend to the attention of those interested in the matter. I have already said nearly every large landed proprietor kept hounds, and hunted on his own estate or that of a friend; but there was no definition of country as we know it now. The Bilsdale claims to be the most ancient pack in existence, and though the date of its origin is very uncertain, I think the claim has been generally allowed to be correct. Bilsdale is a picturesque valley, a cleft in the heather-clad Yorkshire hills, and it was here that hunting fox with the beagle gave them the idea of pursuing the animal in a more ambitious way. Finding the beagles too fast to be followed on foot in a straight run, they who possessed horses would ride, and then they would find the beagles too slow for the horses: thus gradually larger hounds were procured, and what at first had been merely a duty of extermination, became a most delightful and exciting pleasure. The Bilsdale hounds were a trencher-fed pack for a great many years, but I hear lately kennels have been built, and the primitive style has been abandoned.

Formerly 'Old Bob' the whip would ride down the dale on a hunting morning, blowing his horn, and at the sound, from every farmhouse one of the pack would gallop out to meet him. It was said that many of the hounds knew the hunting days, and when the days were changed, an old veteran lodging at an outlying farmstead always turned out on the original day, and finding no one at the meet, returned home much disgusted. This happened for several weeks, until at last the old hound's heart was broken, and stretching himself out on the kitchen hearth, he died a victim to change.

Fox-hunting, it will be seen, is thus a plant of gradual growth that, like some strange, forbidden weed, came up by accident amongst hare-hunting and deer-hunting, which then threatened to overshadow it, but which now it in its turn has nearly choked out of existence.

The ancient history of the hound may be interesting and perhaps instructive; but I imagine you would like to consider the animal as we find it now. The latter half of the present century has seen a very marked improvement in the fox-hound's appearance, and the blood that is

chiefly responsible for this change hails from Belvoir. No matter what kennel you may visit in the whole of England, you will find that the best-looking specimens of the pack are in some way related to hounds bred at Belvoir. Within the last thirty years the names of either Weather-gauge, Gambler, or Nominal have been a guarantee for good looks and work in their descendants. To-day Dexter is adding further laurels to the kennel, and appears likely to rival his illustrious forebears.

The merest novice amongst hounds will be struck at once on visiting Belvoir with the character and quality of the pack. At the first glance your eye fails to distinguish one hound from another: they are all of one type, yet each has an individuality of its own, which gradually comes to you as you look more closely. They have bone and strength, yet there is no lumber, and every movement denotes activity. Legs and feet are perfection; backs and loins appear made to carry muscle; and the thighs, over which the rippling sinews play, suggest a graceful strength. Generations of careful breeding have imparted to this pack a certain dignified air of calm superiority,



THE DUKE OF RUTLAND'S GAMBLER

From a Painting by BASIL NIGHTINGALE

hiding the high-strung nerves, without which all that power would be wasted. To combine strength with quality is the most difficult thing in the breeding of either horses or hounds; but I think success has been attained in this respect by the Duke of Rutland's pack.

The three famous Belvoir huntsmen, Goodall, Goosey, and Gillard, have improved and handed down to posterity a strain of blood that will leave its mark on every kennel in England; but it must not be forgotten that these huntsmen have had every assistance and encouragement from each successive owner of the pack. A perfect fox-hound is like a great picture—its wondrous beauty grows upon you by degrees, and the more you look the more you admire; but also, like the picture, it can never be copied on canvas successfully, and that is why no hound has yet been properly painted. A portrait must either fail as a likeness or as a picture. The one is an indifferent copy of God's handiwork, and the other should be the execution of an artist's creation conceived by a mind divine. All copies are an abomination, and art is born only in imagination. Until there is a breeder and lover of the animal who

is a skilled workman with the brush, we can never hope to see a hound painted with life and symmetry.

Though the Belvoir deserve all the credit for making the most of their opportunities in securing the best material, we must not forget to honour those from whom that material was obtained. The Brocklesby, the Badminton, the Milton, and the Grafton have all helped to build up the Belvoir to its present perfection; but though none of these packs have been dispersed, and all have had the same chances, they have not met with the same success. Mr. Foljambe and Lord Henry Bentinck each did great service to the breed in their day, and each left a pack that impressed its influence on many kennels.

It would be impossible to give here a complete list of all those who have been instrumental in raising the fox-hound to its present high standard, but it may be safely said that all those who have bred have either done good or harm. The man who has exercised proper care, striving to attain perfection in make and shape, but never sacrificing working qualities to looks, has done good in his generation that will bear fruit in the future. In

the same way the man who has been careless, and taken no trouble about breeding his hounds, will have spread abroad a noxious weed that will take generations of careful culture to eradicate. You cannot, even with an unlimited supply of money, hope to build up a pack like the Belvoir in anything less than a lifetime ; but by getting hold of good material to start with, and using the best sires, you should be able to breed a very decent pack in a few years. I am not going to attempt a treatise on the breeding of hounds, but there are one or two points that the beginner would do well to bear in mind. The first and most important is never to put on a badly-made or misshapen hound, lest he prove extraordinarily good in his work and you be tempted to breed from him. Then you must never breed from hounds, however good-looking, if they have any such vices as babbling, skirting, running mute, or dwelling on the line. All these are hereditary, and though they may be partially corrected by discipline and education, they are certain to appear again in the descendants. The two qualities most essential in a fox-hound are goodness of nose and drive. The fox-hound *must* get on with a scent,

and the hare-hound may stop to enjoy it. The pottering hound should be hung at once. Dash and drive, however, are virtues that, without being tempered with a keen sense of smell, will degenerate into flash, which is a deadly sin. In the same way goodness of nose may develop into dwelling on the line, unless it is combined with drive. There are very few packs nowadays that would keep a hound with any glaring fault, and still less that would breed from one, so that in starting a pack there should be no difficulty in getting hold of a good foundation. Let us imagine you are a young man who has just taken a country, and has to find a pack; you know nothing of hounds, but are desperately keen. You might be fortunate enough to buy a whole pack that came into the market at the moment you wanted it, or you might have to take over the hounds of your predecessor, and in either case you would have something to go on hunting with. With these you might be able to show good sport, if in good condition and under proper control, but you will not rest satisfied with a moderate pack. Never buy any drafts except those that are unentered, for you

may be sure no one will sell a hound in his prime unless he has some fault; but you may occasionally get hold of a good old bitch that has become a bit slow, has a toe down, or has met with some accident. Do not, however, load yourself up with many old hounds, and do not put them in the working pack, but keep them solely for breeding. I do not advise breeding from old bitches as a rule, but if you put them to vigorous young dogs, and see that the whelps have good walks, you may be successful in getting a nice entry. Visit all the best kennels in England, and at the same time you are picking up hounds you will be educating yourself. When you have established yourself, fix a type in your eye, and breed to that type. Any one can tell if a hound has good legs and feet, but it takes a good judge to be certain if shoulders are right. Never buy a hound with bad shoulders, and if you cannot be certain of him whilst standing, see him moving in a field—ridge and furrow if possible. A bad-shouldered hound does not feel his defect except when he is going fast, and then every stride shakes him, so that after a quick gallop over hard ground

he is more than likely to be lame, and the same thing happens after jumping banks or stone walls. It is not, perhaps, very difficult to know about shoulders when they are at either extreme, but I would not accept the verdict of the most celebrated judge when there was any doubt one way or the other, because I do not believe any one can make certain on this point by seeing a hound only on the flags. I do not wish to underestimate the value of straight legs or round cat-like feet, and I would if possible always have perfection; but at the same time I think there are other and more important points which are often sacrificed to a craze for these two things. I must confess that I am myself under the influence of this craze, and if a hound is not straight, I cannot look at him twice. Nine men out of ten on entering a kennel look first at legs, and if any are at all out of the straight they immediately detect them. The owner or huntsman of the pack knows this will happen, and he will try to keep the crooked ones in the background. There can be no question of opinion as to a hound's legs, for he is either straight or crooked, as the case may be, and the fact admits

of no argument by a partial owner. Such a thing as a really crooked hound would be hard to find nowadays in any kennel, but it must be remembered that this has only been brought about by generations of careful breeding, and a few years of inattention to this particular would make you a pack with legs like dachshunds. Therefore you must not neglect legs, and never be content until they are as straight as arrows.

In starting your pack you may buy a few bitches that are not quite straight from a good kennel, but always insist in seeing the sire and dam, though that is a proceeding I should strongly advise you to observe, both in purchasing drafts and selecting a sire. Bad walks or accidents are often responsible for legs not being straight, but in breeding from these you must see that the dog excels in this point. It is a rule in breeding that where one is weak the other should be exceptionally strong. There is no excuse for using a stallion-hound that is not straight or that has any other fault. In choosing a sire you must see that he has good bone, and that he carries it right down to the toe. Unless you do this you will soon find that your pack is

getting weedy. Hounds very soon degenerate and have an inclination to revert to some imperfect ancestor—a tendency of each successive generation to become lighter in bone. This must not be allowed, and can only be prevented by using sires that are exceptionally good in this quality. A hound may have sufficient bone to carry himself through life, and yet not enough to justify his being used as a sire. By all means get plenty of bone, but avoid lumber and coarseness.

There are many other things which it is necessary to remember in selecting a sire, and the most important is working qualities, but this, unfortunately, is not easy to ascertain. In a first-class pack you may be certain they would not keep a hound with any glaring fault, but what you require when possible to breed from is super-excellence. We will suppose you have already in the summer decided, as far as looks go, on certain packs that you will send bitches to, and have marked on your list four or five stallion-hounds in each kennel that took your fancy. Now that the season has commenced, you will visit each pack in turn and have a day's hunting with them. Unless, however, you have been

accustomed to watch hounds at work, you will not find it very easy to distinguish one from the other ; but it is a good plan to have the sires you previously picked pointed out to you at the meet. Get up a little earlier and start with the huntsman from the kennel. It is as well to choose a day when the hounds are meeting in their worst scenting and least fashionable country : you will then be able to judge better of scenting powers, and there will be no crowd to hamper you in your observations. Some hounds are brilliant at intervals, and then, when scent becomes a little cold, will not take the trouble to put their heads down. This is a sort I advise you not to breed from. Avoid also a hound that does not draw well, for though it may often be a want of education, the instinct of drawing is hereditary. The best hounds are often the most difficult to pick out when the pace is good, for at that time they are in the middle of the pack, and consequently not to be distinguished easily. Never have anything to do with one that shows the slightest inclination to skirt, for you may be certain if this fault is transmitted to his descendants, it is sure to be accentuated. Stoutness,

which may be construed to mean stamina and courage, is also very important, and to find this you should notice which hounds are working hard and running well up at the end of the day. Some hounds have the stamina but not the pluck, and others are gifted the reverse way, but it is no use unless the two are combined. It is as well to inspect the produce a stallion-hound has already sired, and then you will obtain an idea of what he would do for you. If possible, see several different litters, and if you notice that some fault is common to all, you will then know it comes from him and not the dam. I think I have mentioned the essential qualities that you have to remember in the selection of a sire, but the list is far from complete. I may add that the sire which suits one bitch may not suit another, and therein lies the secret of breeding hounds or any other animals.

You may begin putting your bitches to your dogs any time after the first of November, and then your whelps will be coming early in January. Unless you are very short, I do not advise you to have any pups whelped later than the end of June. The reason for having them within these

six months is that they get the best part of the summer for their puppyhood, and will have grown strong before the winter comes. The early pups, those that fall in January and February, must have the greatest care and attention whilst the cold weather lasts. A strong bitch will rear as many as six sometimes, and one that is weak will not do justice to three. You or your kennel huntsman must attend to these things personally, because, unless a pup is well nursed for the first six weeks, it will never thrive afterwards. When you are expecting a litter you should put an advertisement in the local paper for foster-mothers, and mention the date you require them. The best plan is to have the foster-mothers before they whelp, or you may be saddled with one that has been in milk for two months. A muzzle is sometimes necessary when the pups are first changed. A great many huntsmen and men of experience never give their pups any cow's milk at all, as they think the change is liable to give them diarrhœa. I believe in encouraging the pups to drink any time after they are a month old; but the milk should be sweet, and it is better to boil it in order to kill worm germs.

In this way the pups learn to feed themselves, and as their requirements grow daily, whilst bitch's milk gets less, they do not feel the moment when they are eventually weaned. The best milk is that of goats ; but as I do not suppose you would wish to keep a herd of those animals, you must fall back on the cow. At five or six weeks old you can soak bread in the milk, and then biscuit. A little raw fresh meat is good for weakly pups, but it should be cut up small, or they will bolt it in pieces larger than their little digestions can manage. It is a good plan to have a boy to devote his whole time in looking after the bitches and pups, but of course he must be under your feeder's eye. The straw should be changed at least every other day, and the bed sprinkled with sulphur.

Until lately it was the custom to remove certain little buttons and flaps that are of no apparent use from the inside of the ear, in order to mark the different litters. Now a system of tattooing has been introduced, and a combination of letters with numbers is stamped on the inside of the ear, so that by using a different combination several litters can be marked with comparatively few

letters and numerals. This, however, is a matter that can be left to each individual's own method, and the only thing necessary is that each litter should have its distinguishing mark. The litters should be carefully entered in the kennel-book with their marks under the dam's name and the hound they are by. This book should have all particulars rigorously entered up, with the name and address of the puppy-walker, in addition to litter-mark. Failure to fill in these details would soon land the kennel into a hopeless mess.

I have said nothing heretofore as to the walking of puppies, but I tell you now that the whole future success of your breeding hounds rests on being able to get good walks. A farmhouse is an ideal home for a puppy, and you must make friends with the farmers—or, better still, their wives—if you wish your pack to prosper. You cannot be too generous in the matter of prizes at your annual puppy-show, and the luncheon which you must give on that occasion should be as smart and as festive as you can make it. See that the day you fix on does not clash with any market or fair, and that it is not during either the harvest of hay or corn.

Any time after eight weeks old, and the sooner the better, you should send your pups out. Remember the pups should look healthy and well when they go out, or you cannot expect them to return in good condition. A dressing of sulphur, lard, and turpentine the week before they go will be found beneficial, if they have the least suspicion of insects on their skin. However early you have pups, it is better not to send them out before April.

The following March you will send a cart round to collect them, having previously given each walker notice by post the day you intend to fetch his puppy in, or you may have your journey for nothing. The first thing to be done when these young hounds come in is to give them all a dose of worm medicine—or, better still, two at an interval of three or four days. This is the time when you may expect distemper to ravage your kennel, and a beautiful lot of young hounds may come in that will be all dead in a week. By removing all worms you will have given their constitutions a better chance of fighting the disease, and with care you ought not to lose many. Every case should be isolated directly it appears,

and disinfectants liberally sprinkled throughout the kennel. The invalid should be kept warm and dry with plenty of clean straw on the bed; but the floor of the kennel should not be swilled with water, and instead creosoted sawdust may be put down. Eyes and nose should be sponged twice a day, using a disinfectant in the water. Remedies that I have found useful are Gillard's compound and Pacita. The first should be given according to directions in the early stages of the disease, until the fever has gone, and the second will be found invaluable as a tonic to restore appetite and strength. There are doubtless many other remedies equally good, but I can speak personally of the efficacy of these two.

The education of the young hounds should commence at once, and the first thing is to get them accustomed to couples. It is a good plan to begin by fastening them singly to posts or other fixtures for an hour; then when they find they can't get away, two may be coupled together and turned loose in the yard; but two dogs should never be coupled. When the first principles of discipline have been instilled, the feeder or huntsman may walk them out with couples on, and of course

with an assistant to whip in. Take care the couples are fastened sufficiently tight to prevent them slipping their heads out, as if once they get away you may have difficulty in catching them again. Now is the time the breeder begins to see the fruits of his labours, and he will watch with interest each fresh batch as it comes from walk. It will depend on the number that come in how many you will be able to draft, but get rid of anything very crooked or misshapen at once. Hounds generally come in from walk either loaded with fat or miserably thin, and in either case it is impossible to know what they will look like eventually. It is therefore not advisable to draft very close until May, when you will have had time to get them in shape.

I have been led into details which I had no intention of touching on in this volume, but the wellbeing of the hound is such an important factor in hunting that I think you will forgive me if I have exceeded the space allotted to the subject. I shall not attempt here a list of hounds' diseases or their treatment, but shall refer you to the numerous books which have been written on the subject. I would have you bear in mind the

old saying that prevention is better than cure, and if you will only keep your hounds healthy they will require very little doctoring. The three most important things to observe in keeping them healthy are fresh air, exercise, and cleanliness. You might reply that every one must know this to be as necessary to the welfare of the dog as it is to the human being; but though people may know, they seem to forget very often. Few fox-hound kennels are guilty of want of cleanliness, but in a great many the time allotted for exercise is much too short. By fresh air and exercise I do not mean ventilation in the kennels and getting the pack in condition, but having them out of doors and walking them about. It is the usual custom to walk hounds out early in the morning, and with the exception of a few minutes after being fed they never get another airing until the following morning. When horse exercise begins they are more in the open air, but they then get only three hours instead of eight. Of course it is rather difficult to arrange, as the men have other duties to perform; but I am speaking of what is best for the welfare of the hound, and I say that he should be out in

the fresh air for eight hours. I do not mean that he should have hard horse exercise for that time, but should be walked about. This routine is for the summer months, before regular conditioning work begins, but it must be remembered that plenty of walking exercise will make a splendid foundation for the ordinary work which begins later. I have already said that what I advise is not always possible, but a pack would undoubtedly be the better for it. When you begin exercising you cannot give hounds too slow work on the roads, and you can gradually increase it. Two hours every morning of horse exercise is sufficient if they are walked out again afterwards, and then twice a week they should have at least six hours with the horses. This may sound rather a long time, but if you compare it with a day's hunting, it is nothing. An occasional gallop over turf the last fortnight before hunting commences will put their wind right, but fast exercise on the roads should not be allowed. Slow work on the road hardens the feet and is most necessary, but fast work wears down the pad. In an establishment where money is a consideration bicycles will be found

useful for taking out the pack, and it is easy to regulate your pace with them. Remember your hounds cannot be too fit when they begin hunting, and the whole success of your future season will depend on their condition. I would rather have a moderate pack in good condition than better hounds that were not fit, if I had the choice of the two to hunt a fox. The reason hounds often check after running very fast for a short time, when there is no apparent cause, is because they are blown and in that state they cannot smell. A hound ought to be able to run at top speed for three miles without taking one irregular respiration, and unless he can do that he is not in the condition to hunt. Keep your pack healthy in the summer, begin exercising in good time, and when the first hunting day arrives you will find them more than a match for the stoutest fox.

I shall speak of hunting in another portion of this work, but before we leave the hound I should like to add a word or two on feeding. Custom and experience have proved that the best old oatmeal and horseflesh is the diet best suited to hounds in hard work, and I do not advise you

to try anything else, but cabbages should be boiled with the flesh. The oatmeal is boiled until it forms a thick pudding, and is then allowed to get cold, when it is broken up and mixed with the soup, flesh, and vegetables. After the hunting season you should give them a change of food, and directly the young nettles appear employ some one to gather them and boil them for your hounds. Nettles are most valuable for purifying the blood, and in the springtime when hounds are changing their coats you will find the effect is marvellous. Be sparing with the flesh in summer, but always give some and boil it with the nettles. I do not know what are the chemical changes which occur, but flesh is perfectly good for use even though it smell a trifle unpleasant to your nostrils; when, however, it reaches the rotten stage it should never be given to hounds. Buy your horses alive, if possible, or you may get some animal that has been dosed with physic or that has had some disease.

Feeding hounds is an art in itself and requires the strictest attention. One hound will fill himself with three gulps at the trough, whilst another will pick and lap daintily. The latter

should be allowed in a second time, and the feeder or huntsman must know exactly the moment when each hound has had enough. If you want your pack to be level in condition, great care and trouble must be bestowed on this part of the business. The day before hunting, feed early, and do not allow the thin ones to have a lap before they go out, as some people advise. If you have a hound a little too fine, give him a rest or send him home after half a day; but if you adopt my suggestions about summer work you will never have any that are not able to stand the longest day.

If you are a good sportsman you will not be cruel, but the necessary punishment of a hound is not cruelty. Your pack must be obedient if you wish them to show sport. I very much dislike to see a whipper-in continually hitting hounds for only trivial offences, and it is the duty of the huntsman to see that his charges are not abused. If a hound will not do what he is told, he must feel the lash and should be rated afterwards as well, but always approximate the punishment to the offence. In the case of any serious sin, such as sheep-running and hunting hares or

other riot, the delinquent should be tied up and have a severe flogging that will leave a lasting impression on his mind. It is a mistaken kindness not to do it thoroughly, and you would only have it to do over again in a very short time. Let me, however, beg of you when you wish to enforce discipline and administer punishment, to reserve it for a moment when you have only the hunt-servants for an audience. It is quite natural that any kind-hearted man should object to see an animal hit, and knowing nothing about the case it may seem to him too severe. No one likes to see children spanked, but I have no doubt it is good for them. On the way to the meet or coming home you can generally find an opportunity of giving the sinner a lesson, but it must be a hound that has sinned before and has refused to hearken to your remonstrance. He must know for what he is being chastised, and he must also know in doing it he was doing wrong. Never allow a hound to be flogged until he has had a warning and has refused to listen. You have noticed Rusticus on several occasions during the day in full cry after a hare, and though you were close

to him, he was deaf to your appeal and continued in his misconduct. Now you mean to give him the opportunity of committing the offence again, and to catch him red-handed. On your way back to kennels you go through a field where you know a hare to be lying, and there, sure enough, she is, getting up from her form right under the noses of the pack. None, however, take any notice except Rusticus, and he dashes off in pursuit, but your whips are ready in attendance on either hand and speedily cut off the culprit. The next thing is to couple him up to a rail and give him a sound flogging to the tune of 'ware-hare.' It is advisable to first blood a young hound with fox two or three times before you administer punishment for running riot. You want to enforce obedience, but you must be careful not to kill the dash and spirit, without which the fox-hound is worthless. One hound will take a flogging as if he liked it, whilst a single stroke of the whip will cow another so that he may not get over it for several days. Of course, punishment of a hound should be for the purpose of curing a fault, and not a vent for the ill-temper of the

striker. There are many things, no doubt, to try the temper of a whipper-in, and he may get into the habit when annoyed of taking it out of hounds with his whip. This is a habit which he must not allow himself to indulge, and if it becomes confirmed, he had better try some other walk in life. Hounds appreciate justice in discipline quite as much as children, and will not readily forget an unjust blow. If a hound commits an offence of any kind, he should be punished at once or not at all. In covert it is not always easy to reach the offender, but an opportunity is sure to occur at some future time when he will again transgress, and when he is not sheltered by thick undergrowth. Kennel discipline is the first lesson in a hound's education, and when once they have learned obedience at home, they will give little trouble in the field, but this should be accomplished more by patience and kindness than by the whip. Whips for kennel use should be as light as possible. Calling in each member of the pack by name to the feeding-trough is an excellent means of instilling obedience, and is the usual custom in nearly every kennel, but it should be done without any unnecessary roughness. Unless

hounds are under good control, many foxes will escape that might otherwise have been killed.

I am sorry to notice that many packs have now very little music, and I consider this a great fault. It must eventually tend to breed mute hounds, and a hound that runs mute is a rogue who will spoil you many a good run. There are people I know who say that a silent pack will get nearer to their fox, and this on the face of it seems possible; but we must remember that nine out of ten good runs are down wind, and the galloping of horses can be heard for fully a mile down wind. If you allow your fox to get more than a mile ahead, you will not be very likely to catch him however silently the pack may run. Hounds that have plenty of tongue will always run better together and carry a better head than those that are almost silent. When a pack has plenty of music, you will very seldom see four or five couple getting away by themselves, which is one of the most annoying things that can happen. Your run is certain to be spoilt, for when you do find the truants, you will have no means of ascertaining where they checked, and if you allow the rest of the pack to hunt

after them, you will be encouraging a habit of running dog, which at some critical moment may lose you your fox. Of course we do not want to go to the other extreme, and have a lot of noisy brutes that throw their tongues without a scent. The mute hound, if he is a leader of the pack, will soon have many disciples. Muteness creates jealousy, and prevents a pack from working together for the common good. If you are going to allow one hound to hunt a fox by himself, you had better leave the remainder at home, but I should prefer to leave the one in the kennel or hang him, however good a nose he might have. When the others know that there is a hound who is fast, and who may at any moment go off with the scent without letting them know, they will be continually looking about with their heads in the air, instead of hunting as they should; whereas if they have confidence in each other, they will all be busy until the moment when a comrade's note brings them flying to his side. You will generally find that a pack that is short of tongue straggle and run in a string. A hound's eyesight is only moderate, but his hearing is very keen. How then is a hound to



The Cottesmore Bitches, 1899

know if the silent leader is an unreliable youngster flashing over the line or one to be depended on? Many huntsmen claim they know the note of every member of the pack, but this I doubt, though I am quite certain that every hound can recognise a comrade's voice at a great distance, and yet not be able to distinguish one from the other by sight fifty yards away. When the pace is extra good you cannot expect to have a full-tongued chorus, but, however fast they run, I like to hear a faint note or squeak from each hound in the pack, the combined voices blending in a rhythmical, harmonious murmur.

There may be many packs that have lots of music and yet have plenty of drive, but the one with which I have had the good fortune to hunt, that combines these essential qualities, is the Cottesmore bitch pack. Gillson, the huntsman, deserves the very greatest credit for having not only brought his hounds to near perfection in the field, but also for having made them a smart, level lot on the flags. A look at their pedigrees will show that most of the blood hails from Belvoir, but other huntsmen have had the same opportunities of acquiring that blood, and yet I know no other

pack that has improved as much in such a short time. The good material was there to work on, but the man moulded and blended it, until he achieved a result that is now the admiration of the hunting world. Another man with the same material might have produced a pack that pleased the eye as much and only performed indifferently in the field, but the combination of both virtues could only be attained by the science and judgment of a master of the art. The Cottesmore are to me an ideal pack in their work, and are as near perfection as it is possible to get anything.

The hound is a very fascinating subject, and those who have had anything to do with him are never tired of talking or writing about him. I think I have already exceeded the space which should have been allotted to the hound, and still there are many points not yet touched on. Never keep hounds that are too old to run up with the pack, for though they may be useful perhaps on some very bad scenting day, they will more often do harm rather than good. After the sixth season it is about time to draft them, and though in some instances they may run up a little longer,

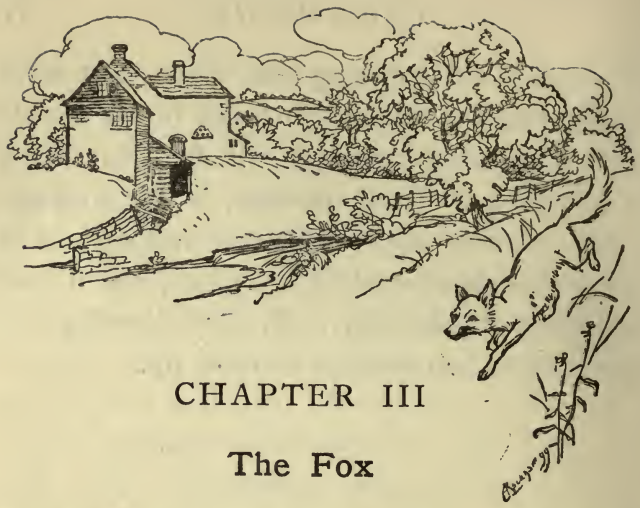
they are very seldom of any use beyond that period. The strength of a pack lies in its new members, and unless a good entry is introduced every year, it will soon commence to go down-hill. I do not mean to say that a hound in its first season is as good as a third or fourth season hunter, but the young one is getting better every day, whilst the old one will soon have passed its prime. Most huntsmen prefer that for the first season a hound should not be too prominent or try to take a leading part, as the precocious ones very frequently wear themselves out before their muscles are properly developed.

The best site for building kennels is either on the slope or the top of a hill, and if possible they should be on a clay soil. A tree or two in the grass-yard are an advantage for purposes of shade, but the main building must be open to the sun, and for this reason a south-east aspect is to be preferred. In summer-time, in the heat of the day, the hounds should not be allowed to lie out in the yards, but should be shut in the lodging-rooms, which when properly ventilated will always be cool. If, however, the pack are walked out often, as I have already suggested,

they will be content to lie quiet when in kennel. It is not always possible to choose a clay foundation, and in that case beneath the floor of the lodging-rooms the ground must be excavated, and two feet of good stiff clay rammed in. Then on top of this must come a layer of concrete, and over that a floor of blue brick, carefully cemented at the joints. By observing these precautions you will not be troubled with that dreadful scourge—kennel-lameness, which is in reality only rheumatism. The popular fallacy about a clay soil being damp is, I think, exploded now. Clay certainly retains moisture, but at the same time it prevents damp from rising. There has been no brick or cement yet invented that is not in a certain degree porous. What happens when you build your kennels on a gravel or sandy soil is this. The heat from the hounds' bodies draws the moisture up from below, and it does not matter if the water is sixty feet down, unless there is a bed of clay above it, the damp is sure to rise in response to the warmth which attracts it.

There is no cure for kennel-lameness except turning the invalid out to run loose, and then,

of course, in removing the causes that have brought on the disease. In proof of the soundness of my argument, you will find that where a kennel is suffering severely, if the lodging-room is made cooler by extra ventilation and fewer hounds allowed in one place, the disease will abate considerably. By thus lowering the temperature, less moisture is drawn up.



CHAPTER III

The Fox

THE horse and the hound were made for each other, and the fox is the connecting link between the two. This remark of the celebrated Jorrocks has always seemed to me a very happy way of explaining the situation. I am quite certain the horse loves the hound, though I am not quite so sure that the hound always reciprocates the feeling, at least when the horse means a large and hard-riding field; but without the fox they would not be able to enjoy the sport they both love. There is something in the look of a wild fox that makes one's pulse beat faster, and breeds a desire to pursue him. Even at some solemn shooting function, if a fox crosses the ride, the

man who has been knocking over pheasants in a cool, businesslike way, will burst out with a ringing tally-ho, and there will be a sparkle in his eye that no amount of feathered game could bring there. I think, however, it is the wildness of the fox which constitutes his greatest charm. The tame animal you see occasionally tied to a barrel does not make you feel in the least excited, and your only feeling is one of pity. It is the idea that you are not hunting the wild animal which makes the turning out of a bagman such an objectionable proceeding to all good sportsmen. Hunting bag-foxes is a prostitution of a noble sport, and can only be excused under very special circumstances. The pursuit of any wild animal is a pleasure and a sport, whatever means are employed; but personally I consider the use of the hound as the best and highest form. The wilder the animal and the more difficult it is to get at, the greater the pleasure in bringing it to hand. Deer-stalking is a very exciting sport, but who would care to shoot a semi-tame stag from his dining-room window?

In my estimation, a great part of the pleasure of any wild sport lies in a knowledge and a study

of the animal you are pursuing. It is for this reason that the paid servants, the huntsman and the gamekeeper, very often get more pleasure out of the sport than those who employ them. I should advise any one who is just commencing to hunt, to study the ways of a fox, and he will then find a far greater interest in every run than if he knew nothing about the animal. Of course, those who intend to hunt hounds themselves must be close observers of the fox's habits, if they ever hope to become successful either as amateurs or professionals. Therefore, you budding fox-hunter, allow me to suggest that you cultivate a habit of observation, and let nothing within the range of your vision ever escape your eye. Any one bred in the country, and who calls himself an all-round sportsman, should not only be familiar with every species of wild animal in his district, but should be able at once to recognise the impression of its footmarks on the ground. He should also know every wild bird and the smaller vermin that are beneath his notice for sport. The man who goes about a country with his eyes shut misses much that would give him pleasure. You see a rabbit dodging in and out of a fence in what

seems to you an aimless way; but stand still for a minute, and you will probably see the lithe form of the relentless stoat gliding swiftly in his track. You may have never seen a stoat hunt a rabbit, and if not, it is a thing the lover of wild life should see.[1] Few people know the difference between the stoat and the weasel. The result is that the latter, who does much good in killing mice, is ruthlessly destroyed. To an ear accustomed to the sounds, the note of alarm in a blackbird, or the screech of defiance from magpie and jay, will tell you that some enemy, and most likely a fox, is in the neighbourhood. When you see rooks circling round one spot and cawing excitedly, you may generally conclude they are reminding a fox of that bit of cheese which the ancient fable tells us one of their tribe lost. I have never been able to account satisfactorily to myself why there should be this enmity between the bird and the beast. Except an occasional fledgeling that hops out of the nest before it can fly, and falls to the ground, a family of rooks seems to me to be out of all danger from a four-

[1] See *Wild Life in Hampshire Highlands* (Haddon Hall Library), page 276.

footed animal that cannot climb. They are evidently bitter enemies, however, and a beaten fox will be followed for miles by rooks, mobbing him and jeering at his distress.

The marten-cat, once an honoured beast of chase, has now become practically extinct, but we still have the badger and the otter. I am afraid that our brothers of the rod are sworn enemies of the otter, and I expect many fall victims to fish-keepers; but they are still fairly plentiful, and will not be easily exterminated. Master Brock is in our midst more often than people imagine, and owing to his strong digging powers he is able to make himself a home from which it is not easy to dislodge him. Unfortunately, he does not afford us much sport, as I certainly do not call it sport for a terrier to draw him out of a box, and he has too much advantage of the terrier in his own earth. When there is snow on the ground in the spring, you may have a very enjoyable day by going to some well-known earths and tracking one as he wandered the previous night; but in mid-winter they will very often sleep for a week or more at a time.

The badger is occasionally accused of killing

foxes, and I believe that it is true he does sometimes kill a cub; but I feel quite certain he never kills a full-grown fox. Not that he is unable to do it, but the fox is much too wary to quarrel with an animal of more than twice his strength. I believe the fox rather imposes on brock's good nature, and makes himself at home in the other's house whenever it suits him. Then Mrs. Fox has a large family in brock's best bedroom, and all goes happily together until that family begins to run about. One day, when the mother fox is out on a foraging raid, the cheeky little cubs scamper about brock's private sanctum, and wake him from a blissful sleep. One snap from the powerful jaws and a cub is dead; but I do not believe a badger will ever go out of the way to kill either fox or cub. How it comes about can only be a matter of conjecture, but cubs are occasionally found dead at the mouth of the earth with a bite through the head, and the badger is accused of committing the crime.

When badgers are very numerous they become a nuisance in another way, and that is by opening the earths after the earth-stopper has been his rounds. They do good, however, in keeping the

fox-earths clean and making fresh ones. I believe a foul earth is one of the causes that either originate mange or help to develop it. I should be very sorry if any one should think I had shown just cause for the badger's extermination; but I do consider they ought occasionally to have their numbers reduced.

I seem somehow to have wandered away from our original theme, the fox; but now, with your permission, I will begin at the beginning, and consider the animal from his birth upwards. The vixen goes with young nine weeks, and the middle of March is the usual time for cubs to be dropped. Although the vixen is by no means faithful to one husband, she generally shows a preference for one, and he it is who helps to find food for the family. Unfortunately, the dog-fox is sometimes killed in the last few days of the season, and it is then a hard task for the mother keeping the larder filled for herself and the family. In that case the cubs never thrive properly, are ever ready to break out with mange, and the poor vixen will boldly seize either hens or lambs in the daytime. This, of course, annoys the farmer, and swells the bill for compensation. It is the

nature of a fox to hunt for his food, and if he gets into the habit of seizing the first thing that comes to hand, you may be certain, if he has not already got the mange, that it will not be long before it appears. Rats, mice, and beetles form the chief diet, and a healthy fox will travel miles in a night searching for these dainties. I believe he enjoys the pleasure of hunting for his food quite as much as we do hunting him. The next time a fall of snow stops hounds from going out, put on a pair of shooting-boots, and make your way to the nearest earth or covert. Find the track of a fox going away, and follow him in his wanderings of the previous night. You will learn some interesting details of the animal's ways, and if you can succeed in bringing the tracks back again to the covert, you will, I am sure, thank me for having brought the idea to your notice.

I am very much averse to feeding foxes, and believe that it gets them into bad habits. There is no harm in helping a vixen when she has a large litter, with fowl heads, rabbits, or young rooks, but never indulge her with meat. When the cubs are big enough to look after themselves,

you can gradually discontinue their allowance. What you want is to feed the vixen well, so that she shall have plenty of milk for the cubs; and if they are well nourished for the first two months, they will get a start that will carry them over any difficulty they may meet in the future.

You must remember that hunting for his food not only keeps a fox in good health but also keeps him in condition, and a fat fox will never show you much sport. If you will examine the billet of a wild fox you will find very few instances where black beetles have not formed the larger part of his previous meal. I have no idea whether chemists have ever discovered any medicinal properties in the black beetle, but I believe it has the virtue of cooling a fox's blood and thereby warding off the mange.

The vixen usually draws her earth out a week or two before the cubs arrive, and when the earth-stopper finds this has been done, he should never close up the entrance on a hunting-day. It is much better that an old dog-fox should occasionally get to ground than a heavy vixen be killed. Fortunately there is very little scent with a vixen in cub, which is, I suppose, a pro-

vision of nature; but unless a certain amount of care is exercised she may get killed in covert. If hounds are out of blood, a huntsman is not to be trusted always in the matter of vixens, and the master should see to this himself after the first of March.

When the cubs are six or seven weeks old they will come to the mouth of the earth and eat any dainty bit of game that their mother may bring them. At three months the vixen will have generally moved them to a covert, if the earth is elsewhere, and then they will begin to hunt for themselves, though I think it is more for fun and the following of a natural instinct than to get food.

In countries where dry sandy earths are scarce the vixen has her cubs in a hollow tree or some convenient sheltered spot, but they are always in danger of being killed by a wandering sheep-dog, and it is safer to make earths, which they will generally use. There are many objections to artificial earths, and I think the greatest is that it gives the fox-stealer a very easy chance of carrying on his nefarious trade. They also are a means of spreading the mange, but directly this disease

declares itself they should be all closed until the district can show a clean bill of health again. There are several different methods of building these earths, but I think the best is the horse-shoe shape, as that plan avoids draughts. They must, of course, be well drained, and it is better if they have a little slope. If pipes are used, those at the entrance should not exceed eight inches in diameter, and if a chamber is made in the middle — the bend in the horse-shoe — it should be built of blue brick and cemented, but the chamber should not be too big, and it must not be high enough for a fox to stand upright. Foxes, I regret to say, are not quite as clean in their habits as some animals, and they will soon foul a too roomy earth. If it is decided to build a chamber, the top should be covered with a slate slab, and plenty of soil over that to prevent inquisitive people from looking in. When there is plenty of lying in a covert, I think it is a good plan to close your artificial earth for July and August, so that it may have a chance of getting sweet and clean. If the vixen lays up in a place where she is in danger of being molested, balls of waste soaked

in paraffin should be poked into the hole with a stick, and she will then soon take the hint to move them elsewhere. Small farmers who have rabbit-warrens to keep down the butcher's bills are not always pleased to have a litter of cubs quartered on them in the spring of the year when the rabbits are breeding, and the huntsman must see that the vixen shifts her nursery to a more friendly neighbourhood. The huntsman or master must make it his business to keep in touch with the earth-stoppers during the summer, and he should know the exact whereabouts of each litter. When one district is rather short of foxes and another in the same hunt is over-stocked, it is advisable to remove a vixen with her cubs to some covert where there is no litter. The mother and little ones should be dug out and taken direct to the covert where they are wanted, then they should be put in an artificial earth and the vixen stopped in for a week. Of course they must be fed every evening, and as the vixen is in a strange country where she would not know her way about, it is as well to provide food all through the summer. Moving cubs is a very delicate operation, and the hunts-

man should personally superintend. The best time to move, I think, is when the cubs are about three weeks old, as then they are beginning to grow too heavy for the vixen to carry far, and it must not be forgotten that her first inclination is always to get home.

A fox must have a dry place to lie in, and that place must be free from all disturbance. This is all he wants, but this he must have or he will not patronise your covert. The dry place may be a bunch of rushes in the middle of a swamp, or a bank in an osier-bed that is half under water, but if the kennel itself is dry and sheltered he is quite content. Though the wild fox is a very shy animal, hating to be seen by man, I do not think he minds people in his neighbourhood if they are unaccompanied by dogs. Woodmen have frequently told me of foxes lying within a few yards of where they have been working all day, and have put them up as they were going home. The keeper of a celebrated covert, and who is also the woodman, told me that one day he brought his dinner as usual tied up in a cotton handkerchief, inside a flag basket which he laid on the ground

and left about twenty yards from where he was working. When he went for his midday meal he found the handkerchief half-way out of the basket and the mutton-bone missing which was to have been part of his dinner, a strong smell of fox in the basket leaving no doubt who had been the thief. Some people go so far as to say that foxes like the society of human beings, but that I am not quite sure about. We must remember that the animal we all do our best to protect and look after during the summer, lives under very different circumstances from his ancestor of two hundred years ago, against whom was every man's hand. Both animals and birds soon find out when they are not molested. The wary old blackcock will allow you to get within a few yards in the summer-time; the wood-pigeon, shyest of all birds, has become in the London parks as tame as the house-sparrow; and hares will hardly take the trouble to get out of your way, if they are free from dogs or guns for a few years.

The question is often asked, 'What can I do to have foxes in my covert?' The first thing to

be done is to ensure the place being kept perfectly quiet, and that means a vigorous exclusion of dogs. A dog should not be allowed in a covert on any pretence whatever, and if the keeper possesses one he should leave it at home when he goes to stop the earths. A fox likes to lie in a place where he feels he can sleep peacefully, without having to be continually on the alert for the approach of prowling dogs. It is the doggy smell which hounds leave in a covert[1] that prevents foxes lying in it for some time. The young foxes bred in that covert, and knowing no other home, are not quite so particular and will soon return. If, however, you wish to find the wary old traveller, your covert must have at least three weeks' rest before it is drawn again. This does not apply to large woodlands, but only to small places of twelve acres and less.

You must not expect to find foxes always in the same spot. Gorse affords the driest lying, and therefore it is the most likely stuff to find in on a wet day; but when exposed to a high

[1] It clings to the covert as the smell of the ferret to the rabbit's burrow, and has the same deterrent effect on the wild creature.—EDS.

wind you must look elsewhere. The reason of this is that the wind keeps the gorse continually moving, and it is easy to understand, an animal that is obliged to sleep with one ear open for any coming danger would object to this perpetual rustling above his head.

Woods and plantations are unlikely places in wet weather on account of the drip from the trees, but in a cold wind they afford the warmest shelter. A dry bed and shelter from the wind are the two things most essential to a fox's comfort. Large woods have generally some places where the trees are not close together, where there are bunches of long grass and thick undergrowth, and it is in these spots that a fox is able to find a kennel to his liking, be the weather windy or wet. Foxes have their own individual tastes, and it is not safe to class the whole tribe by the conduct of one particular specimen. I remember, one cold frosty morning, seeing a fox curled up on the top of a ridge in the middle of a bare grass field that was fully exposed to the wind. According to preconceived ideas he ought to have been lying snugly in the warmest corner of some covert, but there he

was and his coat was covered with hoar frost, showing that he must have finished his supper and gone to bed some hours before sunrise.

Foxes will lie out in the open when the coverts, where they usually live, are disturbed too often. I have said already artificial coverts should not be drawn oftener than every three weeks. Outlying foxes are a great nuisance, as they generally get up just when the hounds are becoming tired, and cause a change at a critical moment. They are never, or hardly ever, to be found when wanted, and they usually do more damage to the poultry. Mange often causes them to lie out, or they may have been driven away from the covert where they were bred by other foxes, for it is a quarrelsome animal, and it is not often you will find a brace of dogs over three years old lying close together. There are many other reasons which cause them to lie out, and which we know nothing about. The covert which we think is sacred between one visit of hounds and the next is very probably drawn two or three times a week by terriers and sheep-dogs.

In making an artificial covert, that is a place



A Celebrated Quorn Covert

expressly for the purpose of holding foxes, I would not have it less than five acres or more than twelve. Anything under five acres cannot be depended on with any degree of certainty, and anything over twelve gives a fox, unwilling to go away, too great an advantage over hounds. Of course I am speaking of a thorn or gorse covert, and not a place that is planted with trees. If the field you intend to plant is not naturally sheltered by the lie of the land or by trees, I advise you to put in, all round the outside, a double row of Austrian pines, as they grow very quickly and make a splendid break for the wind. It is a good plan to have a whitethorn barricade of about ten yards deep all round the covert, the thorn to be layered and then kept cut. The object of this is to prevent people and cattle from getting in and disturbing the foxes, but whitethorn does not make good covert of itself unless mixed with privet. Blackthorn makes the best covert, though there are times when gorse is preferred.

If I were going to make a covert I would choose, if possible, that it should be about ten acres and, if there was any slope, that it should face

south-west. Round the outer edge I would have the double row of Austrian pines, and within that a belt, fifteen yards wide, of whitethorn and privet—this, as I have said, to be layered when it is about six feet high and thereafter topped every year; the remainder to be divided into four parts with rides of no greater width than four yards, two quarters to be planted with blackthorn and the other two sown with gorse. This allows of one quarter being cut down every third year, which is necessary to prevent the covert from becoming too hollow at bottom. The blackthorn should be planted three or four feet apart and kept free from weeds for the first year. When expense is no object the ground intended for blackthorn should be double-dug, that is taking two spits deep and putting the top soil below: this enables the roots to take a firm hold where they will find plenty of moisture and are independent of dry weather. Some people advise planting in the autumn and others in the spring, though I prefer the ground dug in the autumn and planted in the spring.

The ground you intend for gorse should be ploughed shallow in the autumn and left through

the winter for the weather to pulverise: you will thus get a good seed-bed to sow on in the spring. It is absolutely necessary to have a fine soil on top if you wish the gorse to grow well. The seed must not be sown before the first of May, as it is liable when in the first leaf to be killed by frost. The ground ought to be harrowed three or four times before sowing, and the seed can be put in with an ordinary farm drill about ten inches between the rows. After drilling, a roller of medium weight should be used until the surface is as firm and as smooth as a gravel-path. It is very important that the ground should be solid, as gorse roots do not go deep and a long spell of dry weather would wither them up. Do not spare the seed, as it is always easy enough to chop some out if it comes too thick. The weeds should be kept down for the first two years between the rows, but the ground must not be loosened in the operation of hoeing. When there are rabbits, the young gorse must be protected with wire-netting, and then you may hope to see your covert hold a fox in its third year. There is this objection to gorse, that a very severe frost may cut the whole

of it down, and then, if all your eggs are in one basket, your covert is useless for three years.

I do not mean to assert that this is the best and the only way of making a covert; but I do not think you would be disappointed with the result, if you followed my advice. Swampy ground that is useless for any other purpose may be converted into an excellent covert by planting osiers; but if the soil is very wet, the best plan is to throw up banks four feet wide with narrow ditches between. This gives the fox a dry place to lie on, and the osiers thrive better. If you want a place that will hold a fox the first year, you must make what is called a stick-covert. Supposing the field you intend to convert is in grass, you must have it grazed down close in the spring, and then well scarified with heavy harrows. Procure grass-seeds that grow tall and rank from your seedsman—there are certain kinds sold for the purpose,—then sow them and, if possible, top-dress with soil. A little artificial manure would help matters, as it is important to get a luxuriant growth. The sticks should be white-thorn, and must be firmly driven in the ground,

about four feet apart. This, of course, has to be done after the seeds have been sown. If it is intended to leave the covert for more than two years, it is worth while to plant blackberry roots at the foot of every other stick—that is supposing it possible to obtain them. The blackberry brier grows very quickly, is not easily choked with grass, and makes excellent lying for a fox.

In those countries where the hunt has the management of the coverts, it would be a good plan if they hired a few acres as a nursery for gorse, sowing a small quantity every year. Young gorse plants cannot be bought, but they are very easily grown, and if the hunt had always a stock of three-year-olds, they would find them very useful in filling up bare places in coverts which did not require entirely renewing.

The subject of coverts is one of great interest to every one connected with fox-hunting ; but I have already written more than I intended, and am afraid my details may bore you. Trees can hardly be called coverts, though in some districts they are the most likely places to look for a fox. I believe that where this is the case you will find the soil of a damp, spongy nature, and the foxes

lie up in the trees because they cannot find a dry bed on the ground. Contrary to the general idea, clay affords the driest lying, whilst the warmth of a fox's body draws the moisture up through a porous soil.

Much harm is done by the injudicious turning down of foxes: mange is very often one of the results, and it also annoys the farmers of the district. In my opinion, no one ought to turn down foxes in a country except the master, or without his special permission. If a man has coverts and is interested in hunting, he naturally likes to have foxes, but he very probably does not know how scarce or plentiful they may be in the neighbourhood. Then, unless foxes that are turned down are properly looked after, they will never thrive or show sport. The usual plan is to get a litter of cubs from Scotland, and turn them into an earth that is wired round. If they are kept shut in too long they are certain to contract the mange, and if let out too soon will wander away to be killed by dogs. I have already said that the best plan, when possible, is to secure the vixen as well. Of course, no one must think of buying foxes except from a country where it is

known there is no hunting; but there are many parts of Scotland where it would be impossible to hunt, and the keepers kill every fox they can. It will sometimes happen that cubs are brought or sent to you only a week or two old, and in that case they should be kept in a stable until they are three months, before being turned into the earth. The stable should be littered with peat-moss at least a foot deep, and there should be drain-pipes for them to hide under, as it is important they should acquire the habit of going to ground before being put in an artificial earth, and no attempt should be made to tame them. Until they are turned out, they should be caught occasionally, and their coats well dusted with dry sulphur, which will keep them free of insects,—a frequent cause of mange.

The fox has many enemies besides those that may be called legitimate, and the sheep-dog is the one that gives him most trouble. Fortunately the sheep-dog, in most instances, is too much of a cur to tackle a fox; but occasionally they have a dash of some other blood that gives them spirit, and then, if they have a turn of speed, the foxes in the neighbourhood will suffer. Many tired

foxes are killed in this way, but no one hears anything about them. I should like to see a breed of sheep-dogs limited to a height of fifteen inches, which would be quite big enough for work in an enclosed country, and they would not be a continual source of danger to foxes and hares. It would be very much to their interests if the hunt gave prizes for the best sheep-dog under fifteen or sixteen inches, and made each shepherd work his own dog in the competition. The sheep-dog nuisance[1] is felt chiefly in grass countries and where the holdings are small. The fox has many other enemies: the hostile keeper, the aggrieved owner of poultry, the farmer who does not want the hounds, and the sporting navvy with a game terrier. All these men get opportunities of destroying at times, and it is to be feared they seldom miss a chance when it comes to them.

I am not sufficiently scientific to know the different varieties of mange that affect the fox, but I am quite sure they are more numerous than is generally allowed. The same disease may, I imagine, assume different forms. The variety

[1] Quite true: this nuisance is increasing, and from a hunting and game-preserving point of view is to be deprecated.—EDS.

that affects the blood must, I think, originate in the animal itself, and not be the result of contact with others. Does this disease arise from the want of some particular food, or is it inherent in the fox's constitution? I remember my terrier running a fox down in the open, which had not lost a hair from either back or breast, but on examination I found the body was one mass of pustules. This disease was undoubtedly that of the blood. As I have already said, I am not properly qualified to discuss this question, and if it were otherwise, this would not be the place for such discussion. All we have to consider is how we can best avoid the disease, and how to stamp it out when it appears. The most important thing is not to have your foxes too thick on the ground, and never to turn any out if it can be avoided. Foul earths breed insects and parasites, which in their turn are causes of mange. Every animal has, I believe, its own particular flea, and whether they are there for the good of their host or not is a question I cannot decide to my own satisfaction. When, however, the insect becomes too numerous, then the animal suffers; but is the animal's weakness the cause or the result of the

insect's increase? Where rabbits are very heavily stocked, it will be found that their coats are swarming with insects, and this state of things is the general prelude to a very heavy death-rate. In moderation the flea and others of that tribe may do good, but I advise you when turning foxes down to see that their coats are free from every sort of vermin. It never occurred to me before that perhaps civilisation is suffering now in gout, eczema, and other things, for having exterminated that homely flea which must have been the constant companion of our ancestors. If you feed foxes—I have already said it is a bad practice—always vary the entertainment as much as possible, and never give meat. What you give should be merely a little help and not a regular meal. I have never yet seen a fox in confinement with the gloss of health on his coat, which proves they want certain foods that we cannot provide. If you get mange in your coverts, the best plan is to take two or three couple of old hounds, net the rides and bag all the foxes, then you can examine each carefully, destroying the affected and turning out again all the clean ones. You want several assistants for this plan,

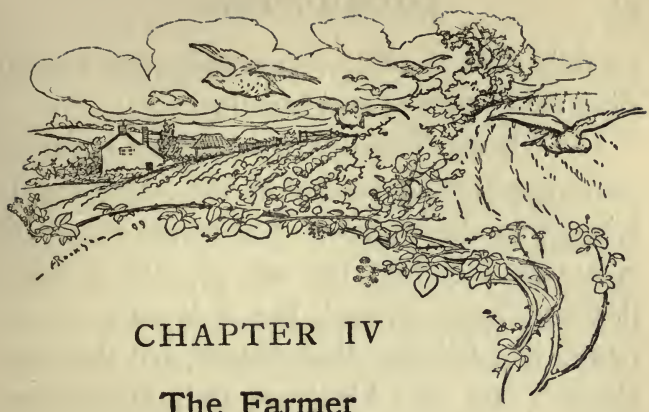
and needless to say it is only possible in small coverts.

If foxes are not gifted with reason, they have a cunning instinct which answers the same purpose. They know at once the sounds which herald the approach of the hunt, and a veteran will often leave a covert when the cavalcade is two or three miles away; but he reasons that on previous occasions when he heard those same sounds before, he had a very narrow escape, and he therefore now accepts the warning to flee in good time.

I remember a certain day, one very dry cub-hunting season, when there was neither scent in covert or out, and it was quite hopeless expecting to hunt a cub to death. Hounds, however, marked a fox to ground in an artificial earth, and this seemed an excellent opportunity of getting blood, which it would be impossible to attain by other means. The whips were left in charge of the pack some distance away, whilst the huntsman and myself set about the task of eviction. I put the terrier in the earth, and a few seconds later a beautiful fox was noosed by the huntsman's whip, but as there was still

another inside, we decided to catch both and sacrifice the worst. I therefore held the first fox whilst the second was being captured. Before the second had bolted into the deftly handled noose, the one I was holding had apparently died from strangulation by my whip. I was very much concerned at having, as I thought, killed a fox, and loosing the whip, held him up by the back of the neck. The eyes were closed, the jaws gaped, and the body hung limply down from my hand: every appearance of death was there. I laid him down on the ground, as I thought, a corpse, but the instant I let go of his neck, he jumped up and dashed off into the covert. There was no doubt about it being a case of shamming death, and the only question is, had he reasoned with himself that this might prove a means of escaping?[1]

[1] The whole question of wild creatures 'shamming death' to protect themselves or young is a very interesting one, to which the close attention of naturalists may well be directed. Many instances of quadrupeds, birds, and even insects (such as the humming-bird, hawk-moth, and the magpie or currant moth), to all appearance 'shamming death' or disablement, have been given of late by observers.—EDS.



CHAPTER IV

The Farmer

Pessimists tell us that fox-hunting will not last many years; but as the number of people who hunt increases every season, I do not think we need pay much attention to this doleful view. It may be that this increasing popularity will necessitate the sport being carried on in a different manner, but I do not believe that time has yet arrived, and to anticipate it would be a mistake.

The relations between those who hunt and those who provide the land to be hunted over are occasionally rather strained, but I think things go fairly smoothly as a rule. Sometimes a thoughtless fool forgets that we hunt only by the courtesy of the farmer, and annoys him in some way or does some unnecessary damage; but most men

are fully alive to the privilege they enjoy and do all in their power to avoid friction.

I have heard it said that the farmer ought to encourage hunting because of the money that it brings into the country. The money thus spent may eventually help the sale of some product that the farmer grows; but it is only one in twenty who feels the direct benefit, and the other nineteen may very likely see their farms more ridden over than the lucky one. You cannot expect a farmer or any other man to appreciate a benefit unless it comes direct, and it is easy to understand his irritation when his fences or crops are damaged. What advantage is it to Giles, who has a grass-farm across which hounds run every week, if his neighbour sells his oats to a hunting-man? Also, how can you expect the farmers to feel thankful because Mr. Crœsus the millionaire spends two hundred a week amongst the local shopkeepers, and as much more in wages? Of course, every one benefits indirectly, and the farmer amongst others; but still the fact remains, that he sees the actual loss by damage and does not see the gain to himself. The question is really more national than local, and were hunting to be

stopped to-morrow, the amount of money that would go abroad would be enormous—money which now is spent in England.

Now that we are on the topic of farmers, I will take the opportunity of making a few observations which I hope may help the beginner to avoid all friction with those who occupy the land. Farming, you must remember, in the best of times is never very remunerative, and the man who is losing money is apt to be irritable. Take every possible precaution not to give offence, and be always courteous in addressing those who are in any way connected with the land. It might be argued that no man with pretensions to be a gentleman would act otherwise, but unfortunately, in the heat and excitement of a run we sometimes do not study our speech. I have often seen an occupier of the land holding his gate open whilst men galloped through without turning their heads or murmuring a word of thanks, and amongst the crowd are generally many women. A man will often also curse the farmer who is standing on his own land because he does not get out of the way quick enough. The men who do these things have the most perfect manners in the ordinary moments

of life, but hunting either drives them mad with excitement or makes them sick with funk, and in either case they know not what they do. Habit is everything; and you who are just beginning your hunting career would do well to acquire a habit of controlling your speech in moments of excitement, and of returning thanks to those who do you the slightest service. If the man who holds the gate open for you is a labourer or a child, a small piece of silver or copper should always be in a handy pocket ready to fling them as you gallop through; but if there is not time for the coin, you can always say 'thank you.' These are the trifles on which much depends, and a close observance of such little things will avoid difficulties which, when they once arise, are not easily smoothed away again. If you happen to break a rail or a gate, and you can remember where it is, pay for it at once or get the carpenter of the village to mend it. Never let stock out into the road, and always close a gate. On your way home from hunting, you may perhaps meet some stock on the road that have evidently been let out by some follower of the hounds. You are quite certain it was not you, because you

jumped in and out of that same road, and now, wanting to get home, feel inclined to pass by on the other side. Allow me to observe, it is your duty to turn that stock through the first gate you can find, and though it may not be their proper field, it will prevent them wandering miles away. The farmer or his man goes round his fields in the evening to count the stock, and if they are not there, you can imagine how annoying it must be to walk miles to find them. Cows have premature calves, cart-colts lame themselves, and sheep run headlong into pits. These are all things that may happen through your not exercising a little care. I may say here that, if you feel that you are the direct cause of any mishap to a farmer's property, you should at once take steps to repair the injury, and not leave it to be done by the hunt. Farmers appreciate acts of this kind, and it gives them confidence when they see you take the trouble to make good the damage you have done, without obliging them to put in a claim.

With regard to the different crops that it is possible to damage,[1] I should say that new seeds

[1] Yes! The damage done to both farmers' stock and crops by thoughtless persons is often considerable.—EDS.

are the most likely to be injured by being ridden over, then beans, tares, and last of all, wheat. Many people think that wheat is not hurt by horses trampling it down, and I am certain no harm is done to it in moderately dry weather; but no farmer likes to see hoof-marks across a field that is newly sown, and we must study his feelings. Old turf does not suffer from being ridden over, except late in March when the ground is wet, and then the marks will never disappear all summer. If it is an early spring, masters would do well to stop hunting a week or two before the usual time, and make it up by beginning sooner the next season. The ground is generally very hard at the end of March, and then not much harm is done; but if there should come a heavy rain, one day's hunting under these circumstances will cause more friction than a whole season. The beginning of April ought always to see the end of the season, whatever the weather may be, for the farmer wants to mend his gaps, roll his meadows, and set everything ready to grow when the summer comes.

I need hardly say that your hand should be ever ready to go into your pocket when it is a

question of local charities or some institution that interests the farmers of the district within which you hunt.

The question of buying forage from the farmer has never yet had a satisfactory solution, and though many ideas have been suggested, nothing has been found that will work well. If you know something about hay and corn, by all means go and buy it yourself from the farmer, but do not put your trust in your groom; and pay the cheque yourself.

Supposing that you are quite ignorant of quality and value in forage, you had best go to the local dealer, but insist that what he supplies you with has been grown in the neighbourhood. When you engage your groom, stipulate that he is to have no perquisites in the way of commission, and always pay your corn-bills promptly yourself. If your hunting-quarters are in the country and not in the town, you will have better opportunities for buying forage direct from the farmers. Never try to bargain with a farmer if you do not know the value of the stuff you are trying to buy. The best plan, if you will only give yourself a little trouble and you want to buy oats from a farmer, is

to get his sample and submit it to the inspection of one or two other farmers; then if the quality is good you can offer a shilling a quarter more than market price. Hay is not so easy to arrange. In the first place, if you buy in the stack it is very difficult to ascertain the quality, and many farmers are very careless in their methods of making hay. I think the best way is to have a cutting made into the stack, then, if the interior is of a bright colour and smells sweet, you can give rather more than the market price and have it delivered at your stables. The cost of cutting, trussing, and delivering, say two miles, would be about ten shillings, and a little more may be added to the price for only inside trusses. Unless, however, your balance at the bank permits you to pay ready money, do not purchase forage from the farmer, or you will do more harm than good. By giving a shade more than market price the farmer will get that little profit which would go into the dealer's pockets. Of course you must not buy any forage out of the country if it is possible to procure any in the neighbourhood.

The middleman is, I am sorry to say, a necessity in most of a farmer's transactions with the

fox-hunter. Few farmers can afford to wait for their money after the corn is sold, and still less even afford to keep their oats for eighteen months. The majority of men who hunt in a fashionable country do not buy any forage until the last moment, when they must have old hay and old oats. The dealer knows there will be this demand in the autumn and lays in a stock during the spring or summer, whenever the farmer wishes to sell. The price, in the meantime, through a heavy crop or other causes, may go down, and the dealer is obliged to charge something for the risk he runs; but I don't think the farmer grudges him his fair profit on the outlay of money and for his trouble.

It is very unfair to blame the dealers: they are business men and naturally want to make a living; besides, they buy the farmers' wheat and other grain which are useless to a fox-hunter.

What the farmer wants is that all forage used in the hunting-stables should be grown in the neighbourhood, and not imported from other counties. Considering that the farmer gets nothing for allowing his land to be ridden over, I think this is the very least we can do for him.

The question then arises, how is it to be worked? I have already pointed out that buying direct from the producer is in most cases not possible. The only solution of the difficulty which I can see is for the masters of hounds to have a written agreement with the local dealers to this effect, that all hay, oats, or straw supplied by them to hunting-men shall have been bought and grown in the neighbourhood. The name and address of the farmer to be given when required. In order to make this plan work, it would have to be an understood thing that any hunting-man wishing to buy forage from a dealer, should first ask the M. F. H. with whom he might deal. This would put a power in the hands of the master which would enable him to make terms with the dealer, and if one refused to submit, he would simply lose the custom of every man hunting in the district. I am afraid this system would add yet another burden to the master's already over-weighted shoulders, but when once fairly started I do not think it would entail much trouble.

Some such plan as this will be found necessary before long, but until the day arrives, each individual fox-hunter must do his best to ascertain

that everything consumed in his stable has been grown on land near which he hunts. Roughly speaking, a horse requires about six quarters of oats for the season, and if you pay a shilling a quarter more than the market price, it only amounts to six shillings per horse, which I think you would not grudge paying for the privilege of riding over the land. A farmer would be very pleased with that extra shilling a quarter, and would then see some advantage in hunting, but I advise you to make him understand at the same time that you know the market price. Some men leave all these transactions to the groom, to save themselves trouble, and I have already said this is not right ; but even if they allow the groom to do the ordering, they certainly ought not to give him the money to pay. There are, I know, a great many honest and conscientious grooms, but it is putting an unfair temptation in the men's way.

When the honest groom accepts a present from the farmer or dealer who supplies his master with forage, he has no intention of passing any inferior stuff into the stable, and he thinks he is taking only what custom entitles him to receive. Let him, however, beware, for this is the first down-

ward step towards dishonesty. No man can serve two masters, and that is what the groom attempts to do when he takes a present from his employer's forage-dealer. The most conscientious groom may hesitate to return forage when the man who sent it has given him a handsome present; but, of course, this practice puts in the hands of a dishonest groom an easy way of robbing his master and blackmailing the dealer.

If stud-grooms would form a union and make it a rule that no member should receive presents from any one supplying his master with goods, they could easily command an increase in wages that would more than compensate them for the loss of perquisites.

I regret to say the custom of receiving commission is not confined only to grooms. My idea is that a thing is either honest or dishonest, and that there is no debatable ground between. I consider it perfectly fair and honest to receive commission from a man when you are acting solely in his interest, but to take commission from one man when you are acting on behalf of the other party to the deal, is dishonest and dishonourable.

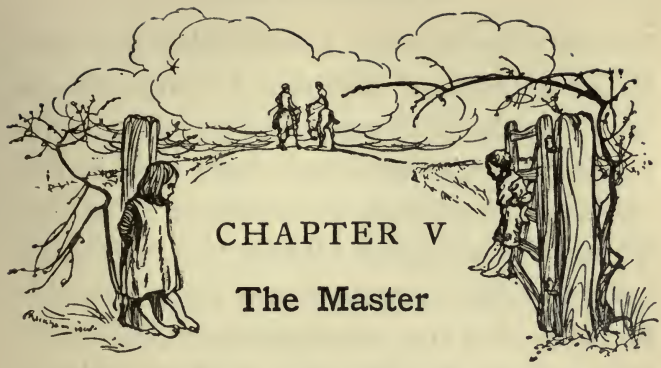
I always think it is absurd to speak of any class

of men as a group and label the lot as possessing the same good or bad qualities, whether they be farmers, landowners, or tradesmen. The class may have some points in common which distinguish them from other classes, but these are generally few. Each man has his own peculiarities of character, and he will not alter them merely by becoming a farmer or a grocer. Taking them as a whole, I should say farmers are a very straightforward body of men, but to say there are no exceptions would be as ridiculous as saying all tradesmen were dishonest, because one was found guilty of putting sand in his sugar. One farmer may sell you hay as good, which you find is quite unfit to give horses, but that is no reason why you should never purchase forage from other farmers. Of course, if you pit your knowledge against his and drive a bargain, you have only yourself to thank, if you get the worst of the deal.

In the matter of poultry-claims, I am sorry to say there are some farmers dishonest enough to send in bills for fowls which they have killed themselves or even never possessed. Because there are black sheep in the fold, there is no reason you should look on every claim with suspicion.

Better to pay smilingly a dozen unjust claims, than to cast a slur on the character of one honest man by doubting his word. It frequently happens a farmer of the right sort will have lost poultry by foxes for several years in small numbers, and yet has never sent in a bill to the hunt. Then comes a time when a vixen, with perhaps cubs laid up in a field adjoining, ravages his hen-roost daily, until at last his wife insists on having compensation, as the poultry and their profit usually belong to her privy purse. The farmer does not like sending in a claim, never has done it, and doesn't like doing it now; but, like all good men, he must give in to his better-half. Then if that claim is met with hesitation and doubt, the farmer is very naturally indignant that he should be thought dishonest, and a good friend to hunting is at once converted into a bitter enemy.

Turned-down foxes and those that are affected with the mange are generally the greatest culprits, but the wild healthy ones get into bad habits sometimes, and I have often known twenty fowls killed in a night. I think in these instances he kills just for the sport, as there are never more than one or two fowls carried away.



CHAPTER V

The Master

An M. F. H., to be perfect, must embody all the virtues of a saint with the commanding genius of a Kitchener and the tact of a diplomatist. To find these qualities combined is well-nigh impossible, so that we give up hope of ever finding the perfect Master, and content ourselves with ordinary men. It is a thankless task, and it has always been a wonder to me that any one can be found willing to accept the responsibilities. Of course, I refer only to the country where there is a professional huntsman, and not to where the Master hunts the hounds himself,—that pleasure is sufficient to repay one for many worries. Every one who comes out feels entitled to criticise and find fault with the Master. The man who is early at the meet asks in an aggrieved voice why hounds do not move off, and the man who

is a little late is annoyed because they have gone before he arrives. The man who coffee-houses when hounds are drawing and gets left behind, considers he has been very badly treated, and, of course, the Master is to blame. The man who over-rides hounds thinks he is doing no harm, and objects to the Master's expostulations; but when that man sees another committing the same offence he gets very much excited and asks why the other is not called to order. Then there is the man who has lost his nerve, and him we will freely forgive, for though the Master gets most of the abuse, the groom, the horse, the country, and the huntsman all come in for their share, and the poor nerveless creature is never happy until he reaches home again.

The troubles of a Master are not only those connected with his day's hunting, for they are only trifles compared to covert-owners, farmers, and the general management of a country. The farmer will write an imperative summons to hunt the foxes which are killing his poultry, and by the same post will come a letter from his neighbour to say he does not want the hounds because his ewes are heavy with lamb; the land-

owner says his coverts are swarming with foxes and he must have them hunted, whilst the adjoining landowner says he does not want hounds until after a certain date, because of disturbing his pheasants. Each of these individuals must have their wishes considered, and you will perceive it is not very easy to oblige one without offending the other.

No one should become Master of a pack of hounds unless he is very keen about the sport, or otherwise he will not devote the time and attention which alone can make things work smoothly. Men very often accept the office because they are rich and because they wish to add to their social status, but having no real liking for the sport and getting tired of the responsibilities, they generally resign in a year or two. These men do harm to the country and leave an unpleasant task for their successors. They are probably lavish in their generosity without troubling to see that their money goes in the right quarter, and deserving cases are neglected. A Master must be ever ready to give and to give freely, but he should know for what purpose he is giving. Local charities,

horse-shows, and anything that is for the benefit or pleasure of the man whose land he hunts over, should be supported by the Master.

The Master has at all times many things that will try his temper, but if he can only keep it under control he will find it much easier to restrain a hard-riding field than by flying into a passion and using bad language. A word in season, given in a clear, calm voice, is generally sufficient to curb a too eager spirit which is threatening to limit the space which should always be allowed a pack. A Master must, however, be always in a forward position himself to do this, and he will find it a mere waste of breath to shout at the back of a man who is a field in front of him. He must rule with firmness and impartiality, but his commands should be worded courteously and not in a tone of insult or offence. It should not be forgotten that men come out hunting for pleasure, and that to be roundly abused for some trifling offence will destroy their enjoyment for the day. The unwritten law of the hunting-field says that whatever language the Master may address to a member of his field, that man must swallow

it all and never reply a word. This is, of course, an excellent rule without which it would be impossible to control the exuberant spirits when they commit offences; but the Master should remember, in calling a man to order, that his victim is tongue-tied, and therefore, under the circumstances, abuse is cowardly except in extreme cases.

Of course, I know it is very easy to sit in a chair and advise a Master never to lose his temper; but I am fully aware of his many trials, and believe that there are occasions when an angel would feel inclined to use bad language. Those men who have already held the position I should not think of advising, but the young man who is just about to become an M. F. H. may perhaps find these hints of some use. Some people think that a Master is especially well qualified for the post if he has a loud voice and a choice vocabulary of swear-words. These are not the qualities which would recommend a man in my eyes—but then, I may be mistaken.

If any one refuses to obey the Master's commands, that man must either go home or the hounds must go back to their kennels. It is

no use threatening to take hounds home and not doing it, for the sooner the field understand the Master means what he says, the sooner will they attend to his wishes. Taking hounds home is, however, a very serious step, and should only be done under great provocation.

In case any one so far forgets himself as to insult the Master, the latter must remember that he is lowering the dignity of his position by bandying words with one of his field, and his only course is to report the matter to the most prominent member of the hunt, demanding an immediate apology.

However much the hunt may dislike the proceedings of their Master, they must loyally support him whilst he remains in that position. An M. F. H. is a king, and a king can do no wrong. If he does not administer affairs according to the liking of his kingdom, the hunt committee must ask him politely to amend his ways, or failing that to resign his crown, but individual criticism is rank treason.

We ought always to assist the Master when we can, and not make his task the harder, as I am afraid we often do. We should remember

that whereas we as individuals think solely of ourselves, he is planning how we may all best enjoy the sport. We may not perhaps approve of his methods, but it is very unlikely we should do any better. We should make allowances for the constant worry and anxiety that tend to upset a Master's temper. We may, perhaps, at times receive an unmerited rebuke, but it is very likely there have been occasions when we have deserved one and have not got it. Every one is liable to make mistakes, and a Master would be something more than human if he never made any at all. The Master and the hunt owe certain duties to each other, which, when cordially observed on both sides, will make things run smoothly for all concerned. However much the Master may abuse us, whether deserved or not, we must accept it all and never reply a word or argue the point. That is a rule which admits of no deviation, and if in the heat of the moment we transgress the law we must make ample apology at the earliest opportunity.

An M. F. H. who intends to do his duty to the country he presides over, should endeavour to live there as much as he can in the summer-

time, and not rush away directly one season is at an end, returning only for the beginning of the next. It is in the summer that he can become personally acquainted with the farmers in the hunt, and allay the friction that has been caused during the previous winter. There will be many little grievances which he will find can be easily smoothed away with tact and when attended to personally, but if left entirely to the secretary, they may assume grave proportions. Farmers always prefer to be interviewed by the Master direct, and a few honeyed words from him are of more avail than much money from the coffers of the hunt. I do not think farmers are singular in this respect, and I believe every one likes to deal with the principal instead of with a paid official. It is not the fault of the secretaries, as they generally do the work more for love of the sport than for a salary, and are nearly always most conscientious; but the farmer considers he is entitled to a personal interview with the Master, and rather resents being put off with an agent.

There are many other things that the Master will find to do in the summer, all of which

ensure the well-being of the hunt. Coverts want looking to, and in the early spring may want cutting or planting. Then every litter of cubs should be visited in turn, and those that are in unsafe places should be moved. Of course, these things can be done by the huntsman, but when the Master personally overlooks it is more satisfactory to all concerned. The future sport depends a great deal on the earth-stopper's care during the summer, and he will be more likely to take trouble when he sees the Master is interested in his work. There is, of course, no earth-stopping in the summer, but the man who performs that office in the winter usually has the care of coverts in his district, and he must see that the village poacher or stray curs do not disturb them. It is the usual custom to pay the man who looks after a covert so much for every find and so much for a litter, but vixens have a way of shifting their cubs to fresh quarters after the first two months, and the man who has watched an earth to protect the cubs may not be the man who eventually draws the litter money. The Master should give orders that each earth-stopper or keeper should report to him when he

knows of a litter being laid up, and then he can pay a visit to verify it himself. A little extra generosity will not be thrown away. Personal supervision of the Master will often put a stop to the tricks of keepers, who will sometimes wire cubs in a small space until the commencement of cub-hunting in order to protect the young pheasants.

I do not mean to say that a Master ought never to go away, but I think that in the country over which he presides he ought to make his home, and should reside there as much as possible. Of course, I have thus far been referring only to the man who undertakes the duties of a Master, and not to the man who takes an active part in kennel management. There is more work to be done in the kennel during the summer than there is in the winter, and the man who sees to the breeding of the hounds will have his time fully occupied. However, even if the Master leaves the affairs of the kennel to the huntsman entirely, he will do well to be often there himself and watch the lines on which hounds are being bred.

If a man is not a landowner in the country he hunts, he ought to buy a small quantity, and thus

have a personal interest in the soil. Farmers prefer a man at the head of the hunt who through his own experience can understand and sympathise with them in their troubles. The Master who does not know wheat or seeds from weeds is not in a very good position to warn his field from damaging those crops, and there are many other useful hints he will pick up by a closer acquaintance with the land. I do not say that a man is not eligible to be an M. F. H. if he owns none of the soil in his hunt, but it would be a point in his favour.

Local shows or other gatherings of farmers should be attended by the M. F. H., and then, of course, he must preside over his annual puppy-show, which he should try to make as attractive as possible. It is the custom on these occasions to ask only the men, but I think the wives should be included in the invitation, as it is chiefly on their shoulders that the burdens of puppy-walking fall.

The Master of a pack of foxhounds is as much a public servant as a member of Parliament, and when he accepts the position, with its honours and pleasures, he must not forget the duties and

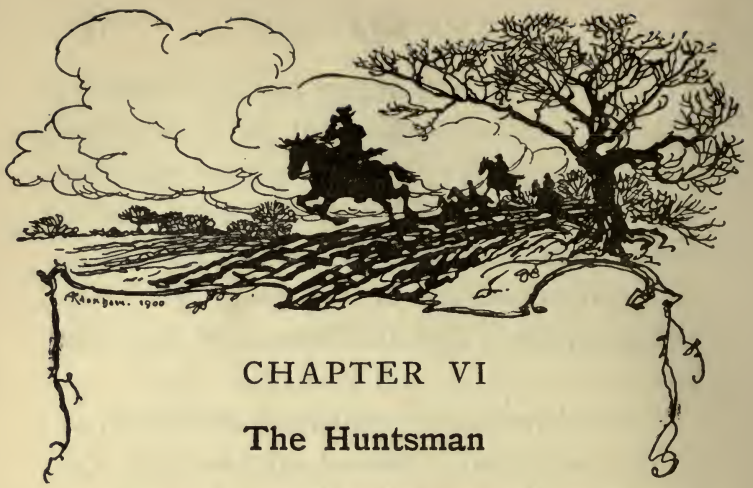
responsibilities which pertain thereto. There are pleasures in being Master even when a professional huntsman is employed; but whether they are or are not outbalanced by the duties is a question that can only be answered by those who have been in office.

I am quite certain that nothing I could say would deter a really keen man from taking a pack of hounds if the opportunity occurred; but, if I make the man who has only a moderate desire for the chase think twice before accepting a mastership, I shall have done something for the interest of the sport.

One of the Master's most unpleasant duties is to decide in time of frost whether it is or is not fit to hunt. My advice to the young Master is that he should decide the question himself, and should on no account consult his field. I may, perhaps, make an exception of some old and tried member of the hunt who can be depended upon to give an opinion that is not influenced by his own personal wishes. As a rule, those who turn up at a meet in frosty weather all want to see hounds find a fox, but they intend to please themselves about following them afterwards. With the hunt servants

it is different: it is their duty to ride to hounds, and if they are worth their salt, no consideration of a horse slipping upon frozen ground will deter them from jumping fences. Therefore the Master must consider whether, in his opinion, the frost in the ground constitutes an extra danger, for if one of his servants is hurt, the blame must lie at his door.

Hounds' feet never ought to be considered, as if they have done sufficient road-work in the summer, their feet will have become hard enough to withstand any frozen surface. Fog is another question which often bothers the poor Master, but if you can see one field clear, and there are no railways in the neighbourhood, I think you ought to hunt; but don't hunt late on a foggy day.



CHAPTER VI

The Huntsman

Some men are natural huntsmen and others only acquire the art by hard work, but no man need despair of handling hounds fairly well if he has the necessary qualifications and a thorough love of the sport. Perhaps I cannot do better than quote Beckford's opinion of the qualities a huntsman should possess. 'He should be young, strong, bold, and enterprising; fond of the diversion and indefatigable in the pursuit of it: he should be sensible and good-tempered; he ought also to be sober: he should be exact, civil, and cleanly; he should be a good horseman and a good groom: his voice should be strong and clear; and he should have an eye so quick as to perceive which of his hounds carries the scent



Frank Gillard.

late huntsman to Belvoir.

when all are running; and should have so excellent an ear as always to distinguish the foremost hounds when he does not see them: he should be quiet, patient, and without conceit. Such are the excellencies which constitute a good huntsman: he should not be, however, too fond of displaying them till necessity calls them forth: he should let his hounds alone whilst they *can hunt*, and he should have genius to assist them *when they cannot*.' I can quite understand that this list of attainments would be rather appalling to a modest man who had no great opinion of his own abilities and yet wished to become a huntsman. It would be almost impossible to find in one man all the qualities necessary to make a perfect huntsman, but he would be a singularly unfortunate person if he did not possess one of those enumerated.

There are very few establishments now where the man who hunts the hounds is expected to have anything to do with the horses, but there is no harm in knowing a groom's work. Beckford wrote from the employer's point of view, and naturally tried to get a man as near perfection as possible for the post; but I wish to

consider the question as it affects the huntsman, both amateur and professional.

In spite of Beckford's long list, there are still many things that he has not mentioned which I consider important. One of these is a knowledge of the ways and the habits of the fox or whatever animal is hunted. The sympathetic intuition of what a fox will do under certain circumstances is partially instinctive, but unless it be based on practical experience the conclusions arrived at will not be satisfactory. The man who is well versed in the animal's habits puts himself in its place and then thinks what he would do under the circumstances. His thinking must, of course, be instantaneous, and he must be ready to put his theories to the proof by prompt action.

Any man with a good head on his shoulders, who is a fearless rider, will show good sport with a decent pack of hounds, and he will be accounted a good huntsman by the majority of the field. Nine days out of ten there will be nothing to tax his skill, and on the tenth day, if he is clever, he will find another fox, to hide his incompetency in losing the hunted one.

Perhaps the quality which I should rank first as necessary for a huntsman is that of being able to ride across-country. No matter in what style it is done, if the man can be, and always is, in the position to watch his leading hound, you may forgive in him a want of horsemanship or an ugliness of seat. It is most important that a huntsman's nerve should be good, because his one idea and thought should be his hounds or the fox they are pursuing, whereas if his nerves are at all shaky he will be thinking of the fence and his chances of getting safely over. Nothing in the shape of a fence, except wire, ought to stop him when he views his hunted fox and has the chance of putting hounds on better terms.

Keenness is, of course, essential in a huntsman. Slackness in the man will soon beget slackness in the pack. No man who hunts hounds ought to go home satisfied unless he has killed his fox, however good the run may have been, and any one returning to kennel content without having accomplished that end is not properly keen. Patience and perseverance in hunting I should class as qualities that are born of keenness, for no one will persevere who is not really keen.

A huntsman should persevere as long as daylight lasts, if the pace has been fast enough at any period of the run to tire his fox, which should never be given up out of consideration for the field wanting another gallop. Of course, if it has been a slow, pottering hunt, and hounds have never at any time pressed their fox, the sooner he is given up and another one found the better it will be both for the pack and their followers.

The professional huntsman should never at any moment of the day consider the field. His one idea and object should be the catching of his fox, and if he be a good sportsman it will give him ten times more pleasure to have a kill at the end of a straight and fast gallop than after a twisting run. The field are the irresponsible item of the hunt: they would be glad to see a fox killed, but they want to have a gallop, and it does not matter to them if hounds are spoiled in the meantime. A huntsman need never be afraid of endangering his popularity if he does his best to catch his foxes in a workman-like way, but if he gives up a possible chance of a kill in order that a few wild spirits may have a gallop, the men he has tried to oblige will be

the first to laugh at him later on. As I have already said, most of those who go hunting are good sportsmen at heart, and they will always respect a man who plays the game in the right way.

A huntsman must be devoid of all conceit, but at the same time must have full confidence in himself. Self-confidence is the term, I think, we apply to ourselves, and conceit is the word our friends use in describing that particular quality when referring to us. There is, however, a difference, though I admit it is not easy to define. The man who is conceited puts an extravagant value on his own abilities and believes himself in his own department superior to every one else; whereas the self-confident man only says to himself, 'I consider myself capable of carrying through this thing I have undertaken, though others may do it as well, if not better.' The conceited man depreciates the abilities of others in order that he may stand the higher in our estimation, whilst the self-confident has merely a certain faith in his own abilities and has nerve to put them to the test. I mean these definitions to apply only to the work of a huntsman and not to any other

walk in life. In other things I imagine we are all guilty of some little conceit, but most of us are wise enough to keep it to ourselves. The huntsman who is conceited is a fool, because the cleverest will occasionally make mistakes in hunting a fox, and he who deems himself infallible will never have the wit to grow wiser. Conceit is a weakness excusable in youth, but unpardonable in mature age.

Unless a man who is hunting hounds has a certain amount of confidence in himself, he will never be able to act at a critical moment with that decision and promptness which the occasion requires. There must be nothing vacillating about a huntsman: he must make up his mind quickly and act at once on his inspiration. If, however, he is a man slow of thought, he had better take time to think than to rush off without any idea of what he intends doing. When hounds are at a check the fox is travelling on, and every second is of importance, but thoughtless haste will not help matters. The man who is always in a hurry will lose more time than he who is both deliberate and slow.

Beckford says a huntsman should be young,

and I suppose by that he means a man should begin early; but unfortunately there is no way of remaining young, and I don't imagine he would have advised getting rid of a man because he had lost his first youth. Wisdom comes with age, and the majority of huntsmen have lost their dash by the time they are ready to profit by their own experience. The young man who is full of nerve and keenness is likely to show sport with a good pack of hounds, even if he knows nothing about the game.

There are few men who do not begin to lose some of their nerve when they have passed forty; but, of course, there are exceptions, and the only huntsman I ever knew who retained his riding to the end was Tom Firr. At the age of fifty-eight, in his last season with the Quorn, he was riding to hounds in as brilliant a fashion as when he first joined the pack five-and-twenty years before. How much longer he would have continued to ride over Leicestershire, had he not met with the accident which laid him on the shelf, it is of course impossible to say.

Future ages may produce huntsmen as good as Tom Firr, but we of his generation can never

expect to see his equal. I consider he was as near perfection as it is possible to find anything in this world. He combined all those qualities which the ideal huntsman should possess. Hands, nerve, and seat made him a finished horseman. He sailed quietly over the biggest fences as if they were gaps, and he was such an excellent rider that you never noticed his riding. He was as quick as lightning, and yet was never in a hurry. He had the patience to let hounds hunt out a cold scent, and knew the exact moment when to press them on to a beaten fox. His voice and hound-language were perfect, and his cheer acted like a stimulant on the pack at the end of a hard day.

Firr was a man who would probably have reached the top of the tree in any other walk of life, for he had more brain-power than is allotted to the average man. His mind grasped a situation at once, and action followed thought with the rapidity of lightning. He had a marvellous intuition of the way a fox had gone, and often recovered the line by a bold cast when every one thought it hopeless. He trusted his hounds and was seldom disappointed. Such was the greatest huntsman of the century.

A good voice is certainly an advantage to a huntsman, though it is not altogether a necessity; but I believe a harsh voice is as unpleasant to a hound as a discord is to a very sensitive human ear. Hound-language may be left to the individual taste, but I like every sound to have distinct reason and meaning in it. A tally-ho should never be used except when you see the fox, and wish to give the pack a view. When hounds are running, a cheer may be given occasionally to get the pack up to head, but it must be used with discretion, and with a very feeble scent it is better to be silent, as in that case the slightest sound may distract their attention. I have often heard huntsmen cheer hounds when they merely wanted to make a cast, and that, of course, is a great mistake. You may do it once or twice without much harm resulting; but hounds will soon find you out, and then when you want them to fly to you at a critical moment, they will take no notice. It is an old saying that you may deceive a pack once, but not twice. A proper use of hound-language may be construed as using the right words or sounds at the right moment. As I have said elsewhere, hounds' hearing is very

sensitive, and they will quickly distinguish the different notes in your voice, if you are always careful to use certain sounds for definite occasions. Some huntsmen will cheer hounds when they are merely drawing a covert; but how they can expect them to know when they are being cheered on a scent is more than I can say. A cheer is an inspiriting sound, and should be used only to urge the pack to greater exertions at the end of a long run, or to get them together in a covert.

The great Mr. Jorrocks very truly remarks that, according to the judgment of the public, 'untsmen are either 'eaven-born or hidiots,' and that 'every schoolboy can criticise their performance.' I must say I like to see a man out hunting take sufficient interest in the proceedings to watch what a huntsman does, and if he has been out before, he ought to have an opinion of his own; but it is rather rash of him to criticise when he can be only partially acquainted with the circumstances of the case. It is generally those who know least about hunting who are ever ready to approve or condemn the methods of a huntsman.

The man who hunts a pack of fox-hounds

must never lose his head—that is, however excited he may be, he must school himself to control his feelings, so that every action is governed by rapid thought and not by sudden impulse. The very keen man is, of course, the one most likely to be excited, but the habit of self-control is easily acquired. To make use of shooting, again, to illustrate my meaning: the good shot is quite as quick as the bad, yet the bad shot usually fires on the impulse, and the good one has trained himself to suppress that impulse. In one case the brain acts unconsciously and is not under control, whilst in the other it directs action by the will of its owner.

There is also another cause which makes men flurried at critical moments, and that is want of nerve; but I have already said that good nerve is essential to a huntsman.

Returning to Beckford's list of attainments, we find he mentions that a huntsman should be 'good-tempered.' Unfortunately we cannot ask him for an explanation, or I should like to have questioned him on the subject. With all due deference to such an authority, I should say that it does not matter what sort of temper a man possesses, if

he always has it under perfect control. There are moments when the man who hunts hounds is subject to the most trying ordeals, and the mildest-tempered is liable to become irritated. A huntsman must under every circumstance keep control over his temper, and he may be sure that directly he loses it he will lose his fox.

There is one quality it is desirable for a huntsman to possess, and that is being 'doggy'; but it is a quality born with the man and can never be acquired. 'Doggy' is the only word which will properly express my meaning, and I take it to be that the man has a certain sympathetic understanding with the dog. I do not wish to infer that it is impossible to become a good huntsman without this quality, but the man who has it will have a greater influence over his hounds, and they will be quicker to perceive what he requires of them.

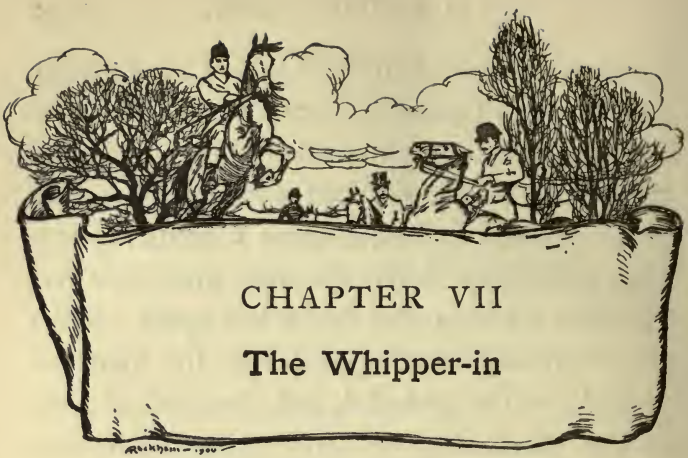
I have mentioned only a few of the many things that refer to the conduct of a huntsman in the field, and the tale is still half-told; but it must not be forgotten that his duties in the kennel are even greater than those in the field. Under the heading of 'The Hound' I have already

discussed the chief features of kennel management, and therefore I will not repeat it here.

It is not necessary that a huntsman should feed his hounds, at least not for the purpose of making them attached to him, because a hound, or any dog, will always leave the man who feeds him to follow the man who shows him sport. There are, however, other reasons why the huntsman should see the pack fed, and the chief of these is that the feeder, not having seen them hunt, cannot be such a good judge of what each may require.

A good feeder will relieve the huntsman of much responsibility; but he ought, nevertheless, to see everything for himself when possible, or he will not be able to put his finger on the weak spot, if anything goes wrong. Of course, in the case of any establishment that hunts more than three days a week, the huntsman will be out when one pack is being fed, and therefore he must rely to a certain extent on the feeder.

A huntsman's duties are to breed, feed, and hunt hounds, which, if he does properly, will occupy every moment of his time the whole year round.



CHAPTER VII

The Whipper-in

THE abbreviated term 'whip' is the word now generally used, but the headline to this chapter is the correct name and full title.

There have been instances where a man over thirty has taken a whip's place and has done well, but it is much better he should begin when quite young, and it is all to his advantage if he has been brought up in the kennel from a boy. He should be quick, active, and intelligent, a good horseman and a fearless rider.

Perhaps it is as well to consider the whips as men serving an apprenticeship for the post of huntsmen. The second whip is ready at any moment to take the part of first, and the first

should be perfecting himself as an understudy to the huntsman. The whip must always remember he is to obey the huntsman implicitly, whether he thinks him right or wrong. If hounds divide, he may have an opinion, but he must keep it to himself and stop those furthest away from his superior. He must always be at hand to render assistance when the huntsman requires it; his eye should be continually roaming the surrounding country to view the fox, and yet nothing the pack may do should escape his notice. When a cast is being made, or when hounds are being taken to a halloa, he should always be in a position to stop them in case they run heel.

The death of nine foxes out of ten is due to the whip as much as to the huntsman, and the former should remember he shares in the glory of the final triumph. Unless huntsman and whip work together in cordial co-operation, the hunt they serve will never attain satisfactory results. Of course, if the huntsman has a bad fall and is unable to come on, the task of hunting hounds falls on the whip's shoulders, but he should never attempt to handle them

unless the master gives the order. By close observation, and watching the mistakes of his huntsman, he will learn much more than by trying to take on himself the duties of his superior.

A whip should count his hounds at every opportunity, and he will then know, if any are missing, whereabouts to look for them. The huntsman has quite enough to think about in hunting his fox, and he should be able to rely entirely on his assistants without bothering whether the pack are 'all on' or not. When a fox goes away quickly down-wind from a large covert, the whip on the up-wind side should ride through the middle of the wood and call on any hounds that may have been left behind. Of course, nearly every master and huntsman has different rules, but in large woodlands I prefer to see the first whip accompany the huntsman into covert. I consider he will be quite as much wanted there as he would in the open. Hounds may divide, run riot, or the huntsman may want to lift them to where a fox was last seen, and in any of these contingencies a whip's aid is necessary. He should not, however,

follow at the huntsman's heels, but should keep abreast or get on to the next ride, though he must never get out of hearing.

A whip should be a second pair of eyes and ears to the huntsman. If he sees a hound do anything wrong, at a time or place when the huntsman cannot observe it, he must remember to report the offender at the first convenient opportunity. There are many little faults and vices which, if nipped in the bud by an all-observant whip, may be cured before they have had time to become confirmed habits.

A hound that has been allowed to hunt by himself when at walk will often have acquired a trick of independent hunting, and will also be inclined to skirt. This is a culprit the whip must ever keep his eye on, and when caught in the act the lash should be laid on with no sparing hand. For obvious reasons the skirter is not often seen by the huntsman in the act of sinning, and the whip, knowing the inclination of a certain hound for this particular vice, should keep his eye on him. An inherited tendency to skirt is generally incurable, but when it is merely an acquired bad habit the necessary

punishment administered at the right moment will bring the sinner to see the error of his ways. Independence, which is a virtue in a man, is a deadly sin in a hound, and, as I have already said, very frequently is the result of being allowed to hunt at walk.

I think I have said elsewhere that a whip should never hit a hound unnecessarily, but there is no harm in repeating the advice here. Punishment should be for the purpose of curing some fault, and unless the offender knows for what he is being hit, the act is one of sheer cruelty. Whips, I am afraid, are often rather thoughtless in this respect, and they also fail to measure the severity of the stroke in accordance with the seriousness of the offence. I dislike seeing a hound get the full swing of the lash from an expert arm, for some trivial fault that a light touch or stroke would have been adequate to reprove.

Foxes very often use the same smeuses as hares, and the whip must therefore not jump to the conclusion that hounds are running a hare because one is in front of them. On these occasions he must ride close up to them, and by carefully watching the old hounds he will be

able to see where the ways of fox and hare parted; but that is more the business of the huntsman, if he is there, and the whip must hold himself in readiness to stop the pack, or a portion of it, the moment he gets the order. When there is any doubt as to whether hounds are running their legitimate quarry, huntsman, whips, and every one else should maintain a strict silence, and then the older members of the pack, who may have only been following on, will soon discover they are being led astray.

When a whip is bringing on hounds that have been left behind, he must make as little noise as possible. I have seen thoughtless fellows halloa and cheer on these occasions, so that the pack, who are only a field or two in front down-wind, hear him and get their heads up. At the end of a day, when a hound is missing and the whip has to go back to find it, he may be allowed a horn, but I would never let him have one at any other time.

A good voice is an advantage to a whip, but let him beware how and when he uses it. Men with good voices are very apt to be too fond of making themselves heard on every occasion. A

quick ear is a more desirable quality than a good voice, and the man who is always making a noise will hear little. A whip should never at any moment attempt to cheer on hounds, for it is of the utmost importance that they should hear only one voice. He should keep his ears and his eyes open, but his mouth should be shut. The man who is always trying to hunt hounds when the huntsman is not looking is not fit for the post of whip, and the sooner he is drafted the better it will be for the establishment he serves. There must be only one huntsman, and however bad he may be it will not improve matters for some one else to attempt to do his work. If a huntsman is never with his hounds, the master should get rid of him as soon as possible; but until he is dismissed or pensioned off, the whips ought to remember he is the only person who should handle the pack. Occasionally the hardest riding huntsman will, through some cause or other, get left behind, and then the ambitious whip will proceed to cast hounds the moment they check, urged on by the thoughtless members of the hunt. In doing this he is exceeding his duty and taking an unwarrantable

liberty. Let him on these occasions stand still and watch the pack make their own cast, and try for the scent themselves. Then, if they fail to hit the line, and the huntsman is nowhere in sight, he may take on himself the responsibility of hunting them. I am supposing in a case of this kind that the master is not with hounds, as, of course, otherwise he will give the necessary order, or he may decide to assume command himself. It is a great advantage for hounds to be sometimes allowed rather more than the usual time to recover the scent, and all the whip need do is to civilly request the field to stand perfectly still.

When a whip goes on to the down-wind side of a covert that hounds are about to draw, he should cast a quick glance over the surrounding country the moment he arrives at his post, for travelling foxes are ever on the alert, and will often leave their kennel when the field are still a mile away. Seeing nothing in the distance, he will then restrict his view to the limits of the covert, and not for one moment must he allow his eyes to wander elsewhere, until a note on the huntsman's horn tells him there is no further need for

watchfulness. If you take your eyes off a ride or other small space you are watching for one second, the fox is certain to take advantage of that moment to cross, and you fail to view him. A whip at his post of observation should never allow himself to be drawn into conversation by any of the field who may be standing near him. He should place himself in such a position that he can see the fox without himself being seen, and when he halloas him away, he must not do it too soon or he will head him back.

A whip who is a good rider, and is at the same time of an obliging disposition, is very often in danger of being spoilt by the flattery of the field. He should recollect the horse he rides does not belong to him, and that he rides it for the purpose of attending on the huntsman. He is the servant of the master, and if he is larking over fences for the amusement of men who do not employ him, he is not doing the duty for which he is paid. He must, however, be always civil to every member of the field, and he must take particular care never to offend a farmer by word or deed. A farmer does not always walk about in best broadcloth, and he very naturally resents any

rudeness on his own land from a whip, who should remember that his conduct reflects indirectly on his master.

I am glad to say that hunt-servants, as a rule, are a very superior class of men, and few are ever guilty of behaviour to disgrace their profession. Drink is their greatest temptation, and in the downward course which leads to dismissal, every one is ready to lend them a helping hand. Of course, it is all done out of kindness, and with the desire of showing goodwill to the hunt. All are eager to give the hunt-servants strong drink, and the stronger the stuff the more they feel they have exerted the duties of hospitality. Therefore it will be seen that the hunt-servant must beware of his friends, and must depend on his own powers of self-denial to uphold him in the slippery path. One of the occasions which has been the beginning of many a good man's downfall, is the taking out of puppies to walk, a task which usually falls to the first whip. He may have to call at twenty different houses, and he may be quite certain of being offered spirits at every one, so that unless he has made up his mind to say no, he will be more than half-drunk

before he has completed his round. When a master of hounds engages either a huntsman or a whip, the one thing he insists on is sobriety, and no one can expect to get a good place about whom there has been the faintest whisper of intemperance.

I have up to now spoken only of the duties of the first whip, but what I have said will apply equally to the second. There are different rules in different establishments ; but I think myself that when hounds are running a second whip's place is not in close attendance on them, though for the first part of the run he may be somewhere handy. On nearing coverts he should get on to view the fox away, and when thoroughly tired should never lose sight of him.

When hounds are left behind it is the second whip who will have to go back again, and he should get to the front again without tiring his horse. He has plenty of opportunities for showing whether his head is screwed on the right way, and it is at this period of his life that he will be able to acquire a knowledge of foxes' habits that will be most useful to him on promotion to the post of huntsman.

The second whip has in reality to use his brains more than the first, for the latter has only to wait on the huntsman, whilst the former must think for himself. If he is a newcomer to the country he should as speedily as possible set himself the task of finding out the locality of every covert and earth in the hunt.

It is as second whip that a man shows whether or not he has the makings of a huntsman, and if he has not done well in one position, you may be nearly certain he will not be successful in the other. The second whip should be studying the ways of foxes, and on his promotion to be first, he can finish his education by watching hounds.

Of course, the ambition of every one who enters a kennel is to be huntsman, and he cannot fit himself better for that post than by closely observing the various duties of the previous steps. No one should become a hunt-servant who is not exceptionally keen on the sport, for it is an extremely hard life, and it is only the pleasure enjoyed in following it that makes light of its hardships.

The whip who is desirous of getting on in his

profession will not rest content with what he may learn in the field, but by hard work and attention to the details of the kennel, he will make himself familiar with the most important part of a huntsman's knowledge.



CHAPTER VIII

The Art Itself

I HAVE felt considerable diffidence in offering my opinions on the subjects already reviewed, but in venturing to write on the mysteries of the huntsman's science, I am more than ever conscious of the magnitude of the task I attempt. Every one who has hunted hounds, and most of those who have followed them, have formulated in their own minds certain theories and ideas as to the way a fox should be pursued. It would be impertinence on my part to think of teaching such as these, and consequently I address myself solely to the rising generation. I cannot hope to leave no point untouched, and when I have finished much will be still left unsaid. Hunting is a sport on which the last word will never be spoken.

I think the best plan will be to begin with the commencement of a day's hunting, and then we can discuss the questions affecting each particular moment. We will suppose you have drafted your hounds the previous day, and all are ready to start when the kennel-doors are opened. A very important thing here occurs to me, and it is, that your horse should be quiet with hounds, for when they first greet the man who hunts them, they are certain to jump up in a way liable to frighten any horse unused to them. Hounds should be always taken slowly to the meet, and in warm weather the horses should hardly go out of a walk, but on ordinary occasions the rate may be set down at six miles an hour. The whippers-in like to have the pack in close order, all crowded up together; but when going to the meet the huntsman should see they have plenty of room. At this time the first whipper-in should be fifty yards in front of the huntsman, and the second the same distance behind him.

On a fine morning, after an early start has been made and there is no need to hurry, as he jogs quietly to the meet, the huntsman will look leisurely from one hound to another, marking the

good or bad qualities of each, and arranging in his mind matings for the future.

I need hardly tell you that it is very necessary you should be punctual and should never keep your field waiting. If the hour fixed is eleven o'clock, move off at ten minutes past and wait for no one; but you should let it be understood what law you give, or you may cause a good sportsman some day to lose a run. When you employ a professional huntsman or leave the whip to bring the hounds on, you must see they have reliable watches, as ten minutes is quite long enough for hounds to stand about on a cold day. Eleven o'clock is, however, the time of meeting for the regular season, and before we come to that I have some words to say about cub-hunting.

Cub-hunting is the period when the pack and the coming season are made. If the master and huntsman then work hard, they may look forward to enjoying themselves later on. Not later than the first week in September nor earlier than the middle of August may be set down as about the time to commence operations. Whilst the weather is hot, hounds should be at the covert-side as soon as there is light enough to view a fox away. Pay

no attention to what people may say about the ground being too hard or the weather too dry. If you have given hounds plenty of road-work during the summer their feet won't suffer, and there is very often the best scent in exceptionally dry weather. In cub-hunting you need never consult the wishes of your field, and all you have to think of is what will be the best for hounds.

The first morning you take out the young entry, go straight to a covert where you are certain there is a litter, and if you know of one in a small spinney that is not a regular draw in the season, it is the very thing you want. You must use every means in your power to catch a cub, and do whatever you think most likely to attain that end. Do not sicken the young hounds by giving them a long morning to start with, but take them home directly they have killed a fox. If you have plenty of country, they would be all the better to be hunted every other day, instead of a long hard day twice a week.

You must remember that if you kill a fox in a small covert, you cannot expect to find a really wild one there for at least two months afterwards. Therefore, in your anxiety to get hold of a cub

in October, do not forget your future sport in November. I know that many well-known authorities will not agree with me; but I consider that you ought never to kill a fox in any except very large and strong coverts. Those places which command your best country ought to be treated with the very greatest care. I would never stop cubs from going away, but would always rather trust to catching one in the open. If there is a drain not far away which your earth-stopper knows they have been using during the summer, it is a good plan to have it unstopped, and then you will be pretty certain of running one to ground, when by the aid of a terrier or a spade you will be able to accomplish your object. Of course, with large woodlands well stocked with foxes you will have no need to resort to any of these devices, and may kill them wherever you get the chance. It is better to visit every litter twice before the regular season commences, and do not scruple to exact heavy toll if there are plenty of them; but if you find only old foxes, leave at once and do not go there again until November. When foxes are too plentiful in a certain district and you wish to reduce their

numbers, cub-hunting is the time to do it, as later on you will find it impossible. Kill all the smallest foxes first and those that look like vixens. You only want one vixen in every covert, but after the first of January you should be careful to see she is spared. All your best runs will come from dog-foxes; and if you can keep one vixen in a covert, she is certain to have plenty of visitors of the other sex. In order to have the best sport, there ought to be one vixen in the country to every seven dogs, as in that case the males wander about to different coverts, and will consequently give you good runs. In my opinion, one of the chief causes of short-running foxes is a preponderance of females over males. The white tag at the end of the brush is no guarantee of sex, and, of course, it is not easy to distinguish one from the other; but if you allow all the biggest cubs to go away unmolested and hunt the small ones that stop to the last, you will not be far wrong. The instinct of the dog-fox teaches him to go away at the sound of hounds, whilst that of the vixen bids her stay at home.

You may occasionally have some good gallops in cub-hunting, and, of course, that is what your

field will desire; but you must not study either your own inclinations or theirs. Your duty is, first of all, to make the pack, and then to kill all the worst or weakest foxes. If in pursuance of these duties a good run does fall to your lot, you will not enjoy it the less because it was unexpected.

Let us picture to ourselves a morning in early September, which shall be your first appearance with the horn. Since last May you have been looking forward to this moment with the most intense eagerness, and now it has arrived. By judicious feeding and plenty of exercise, your pack are full of muscle and in the best of wind; whilst by continually riding out with them they have grown to look on you as their master, whom it is their pleasure to love and obey. The good or bad qualities of the old hounds are to you an unknown quantity; but you have procured one or two ancient warriors, drafted on account of age, and on these you hope to depend in times of difficulty. Out of the twenty-six couple with which you intend to hunt this two-days-a-week country, twelve couple are unentered, and with these as a foundation you expect some day to form a good pack.

I must digress here for a moment to refer to a matter which I overlooked in discussing the subject under the heading of 'The Hound.' In a two-days-a-week country, which is all the amateur beginner should aspire to at first, you will want only one pack; and if you like to see your hounds level, you will not run twenty-four-inch dogs with twenty-two-inch bitches. My advice would be to limit your standard to twenty-two inches, have nearly all bitches, and go to other kennels for stallion hounds. Most kennels draft some small dogs every year, and you would often be able to get very smart hounds in this way: though you would not use them as stallions, they would very materially increase the strength of the pack. Twenty-six couple are quite sufficient for two days a week; and out of that number I would have at least seven couple of dog-hounds, so that you would not be short in the spring. I am supposing that you have to consider economy in your establishment, and, of course, the more hounds you keep the greater the expense.

There have been sufficient rains to lay the summer dust, and there is a slight yielding on the surface of the turf, as a horse canters along.

A goodly shower the previous day has left the grass still moist, and there is a delicious coolness in the air. It is barely daylight when you ride up, and after posting your men at different corners, you throw hounds into covert. We will suppose you have had no reliable information about litters in your few large woods, and the place you are about to draw is ten acres of blackthorn and gorse in the middle of your best country. Though you will probably have no use for a second horse, let them come out, and the men may be of use to you in assisting the whips. Another hint: before you leave home, make a good breakfast, however early the hour, or you will probably be tired before your fox. You are drawing down-wind, so that there should be no danger of chopping an old fox, and riding into the thickest part, you encourage the young hounds to try. Old one-eyed Solomon from the York and Ainsty is busily snuffling at a tuft of grass, probably where a fox stopped a minute on his way to his kennel. The little tan dog from Belvoir forces his way through the narrow smeuse, and then makes a dash at the clump of briers that are interwoven with long grasses. There is a

flash of bright red fur, and a white tag disappears in the thicket beyond. A cheer from your lips and a blast on the horn brings all the old hounds to the spot. The melody soon increases in volume, and in a few minutes every hound seems to be throwing his tongue. Some of the young ones have already joined in, and the rest are following on with the excitement of the cry. Keep quiet now, and don't halloa if you see the fox, whilst they are running well. Listen! there are two or three scents, the tail hounds have crossed the line of other foxes, but the majority of the old hounds still stick to their first-love, and are bustling him round the covert with an echoing crash of music. It must be the dog-fox, and he will very soon have to leave, but at present he thinks the pack are too near to make it safe. There is a sudden lull—now he is away, and you hear the hoof-beats of the whip's horse as he gallops down ready to stop hounds should they come out. Your orders were to stop hounds and let all foxes go. Now blow your horn and take this lot of hounds to where the others are running at the further side of the covert, but if they can hear the cry, they will

soon get there without your help. There is music from every quarter, and the litter are now all afoot. That smart young bitch you had from the Cottesmore—Gillson thought her not quite straight—has met a cub in the ride, has suddenly recognised her mission in life, and is dashing through the undergrowth in pursuit. Sit quiet, bide your time, and don't halloa, but watch the rides carefully. There is a rare scent this morning, and unless the cubs go soon, some of them will lose their lives, but at present, by dodging about, they manage to shift the burden of pursuit on to one another's shoulders in turn, and thus get some respite. See! yonder across the ride goes the old vixen, looking thin and anxious, followed by a sleek cub, whom she wishes to lead away to safety. Let them go, there are more left behind; but one of your field has just come in to tell you, a brace of old foxes and a leash of cubs have gone away, so that you must take care the last does not get away without your knowing it. 'Tally-ho, gone away!' is heard on the down-wind side, and to your question of 'What is it?' the answer comes back, 'The old vixen and a cub, sir.' All right; you

are thinning them out, and you may begin to cheer the pack over the rides, but get forward and have a look at what you are hunting. Stand quiet and watch. The cry comes nearer, there is a stealthy pattering on the leaves, and the next second, a fine big cub with a white tag leaps lightly across. What a disappointment! You expected after an hour of incessant running to see a weary cub drag himself across, and this fine fellow is evidently fresh from his kennel; but wait and still watch. Close on the heels of the first, and following the same track, comes another cub; but how different he looks, as with bent brush and hanging tongue he steals over the ride. You have noted, however, an important point: the fresh cub's brush is boldly tipped with white, whereas the tired one has no such mark. Send word to the watchers outside to let hounds go when the one without a white tag leaves, but to stop them from any other. Now have your first whip inside with you and let him watch a ride, whilst you with horn and voice cheer on the pack to greater exertions. The fresh cub has gone away, and the one that remains behind ought to fall an easy victim; but

the ground is becoming foiled and scent is failing. The cry, which has been gradually becoming less, has stopped altogether, the young hounds stand about with their heads in the air, and the old ones seem quite willing to give up the game. Ride into that quarter of the covert where the fox was last seen, and encourage your hounds to find him again. He is probably lying down, and will not move if he can possibly help it. Old 'Resolute' has put him up at last, and the next second a 'tally-ho over' tells you where he has crossed the ride. Gallop to that spot in all haste with the hounds your voice can collect, and lay them on where he crossed.

Fortune favours you, for the cub has gone away, and that is more than you could have expected. Out with your horn and blow a cheery blast as you gallop to the point of exit. Eighteen couple out of the twenty-six are already on the line, and are streaming over the grass. They revel on clean scenting-ground, and show no signs of flagging, in spite of near on two hours' hard work in covert. At this pace you know they must run into him in a very few minutes, for the whip who viewed him away

reported him 'very beat.' Such might have been the case had all been pasture, but after two grass fields comes a fallow, and still more arable is seen beyond. After carrying a feeble line into the middle of the field, hounds can make nothing more out of it, and look at you, as much as to say, 'What shall we do now?' A bright September sun is shining down on the hard-baked soil, and somewhere in the clear blue sky overhead a lark is singing his morning song in a peaceful, irritating manner. You wish now you had never allowed that cub to leave the covert, for he may have gone on, he may be lying down, or he might have gone back, but in any case you have every chance of losing him. Stand still a moment longer, and let those few hounds that will try, see if they can hit off the line. They flung themselves forward at first, let them now try back as they seem inclined to, for a tired cub will double like a hare. Back on your left-hand a youthful son of Belvoir 'Dexter' is whimpering down a furrow; but you dare not trust a hound on his first day, and watch anxiously an old one go to his assistance. The young one was right, and the sages of the



BELVOIR DEXTER

From a Drawing by CUTHBERT BRADLEY

pack bustle after him. The furrow ends at last in a green headland, which carries a fair scent, and hounds can drive on again. At the corner of the field where two fences meet is a clump of bushes, and a dry deep ditch beyond. When hounds reach this spot they hesitate and snuff about in an undecided way, until at last one makes a dash into the bushes, and then out into the next field goes the fox. The whole pack gets a view, and racing him across the stubbles, they roll him over before he can reach the next fence. 'Whoo-hoop!' You have killed your first fox, and at this moment there is no man in the world with whom you would change places. Now go home, and do not be persuaded to draw again, though hounds and horses may be quite fresh.

The objection to allowing a cub that is tired to go away from a covert is, you may change on to one that is quite fresh, or worse still, get on to the vixen who is pretty certain to be hanging about somewhere in the neighbourhood; but I think there are quite as many chances against you in covert as in the open. As I have already said, if you know of a litter in a small

spinney that is not a regular draw, you are quite right to hold up the last two, and after you have killed one to let the other go. Of course, you will have to study the wishes of covert-owners, and when they are keen about your always finding on their property, they very naturally object to an unnecessary slaughter of the innocents. If you are fortunate enough to have some large woodlands that are well stocked with foxes, the oftener you can hunt them the better sport you will get later on. You ought not to go in the open until all your large woods have been well rattled, many of the foxes killed, and the rest dispersed. You must not allow your foxes to get it into their heads that a big wood is a house of refuge, but rather that it is a place of danger when hounds are about. It is the making of a pack to have an occasional day in the woods at the beginning of the season, and they will be all the better when you take them in the open.

Every litter should be disturbed in turn, and when you have been the round you can begin again; but in your second visit you must not on any account hold them up. I have said I do

not advise it on the first occasion, but to do it the second time is unfair on covert-owners, keepers, and the members of your hunt. By the first or second week in October you will probably have completed the round, and you may then look forward to some fun; but continue to meet at an early hour—say not later than 8.30. The morning is the time when you have the greatest advantage over a fox, for then he has not had many hours to digest his food, and, like other animals, he is not in the best of wind with a full stomach.

Still confine your attention to cubs, and go away with the last. Your field will be growing larger every day, and of course they want to have a gallop, so that you cannot always trust their opinion as to what is or what is not an old fox. You would also like a good gallop quite as much as they would, but they are responsible only for their own pleasure of the moment, and on you rests the future prospects of the season.

I have thus far been addressing myself to a young man who has just taken a country, and who is hunting hounds himself, in which strain

I will continue. Take heed, you who are ancient in wisdom and experienced in the craft, that my notes are only for the beginner and not for you, whose knowledge must be greater than mine.

Most packs begin the regular season the first week in November, but there is generally some special day in every hunt that is hallowed by custom as the opening of the season, and I need hardly tell you in this matter to follow the example of your predecessors. Your hounds should now, after a successful cub-hunting time, have full confidence in both you and themselves. They are quite as determined as you to kill every fox they find, and that is the proper spirit in which to go hunting, though it is needless to say you will not always attain that end; still, you will do it often enough to make you confident of accomplishing it on the next occasion. Nothing succeeds like success with hounds, and a pack that is in blood is certain to show sport.

Have your servants well mounted on handy horses that can gallop and jump. You cannot expect your whip to be on the spot when he is wanted if he is riding cattle that do not know their business, and are always falling. Never

mind about their looks if they are good performers and can go a fair pace, but get as much breeding as you can, and avoid the hairy heel. Of course you must mount yourself well, and do not attempt to make a horse when you are hunting hounds; but if you wish to economise by buying unmade hunters, school them on off-days, or take them out with a neighbouring pack.

Everything is now ready for a start: your whips have their new coats on, and are looking very neat with white neckcloths, cord-breeches, and well-cleaned boots. You must clothe your men, and it is no cheaper to turn them out in a slovenly fashion than to do it neatly. Buck-skin breeches look very smart for hunt-servants, but they would be out of place except in a fashionable country, and you must remember our little pack is in the provinces.

I have already given you a word of warning about taking hounds on slowly to the meet, and about giving them plenty of room on the road. Now I think we cannot do better than accompany you on your opening day, and see if the pack have improved since that first morning cub-hunting.

On the stroke of eleven you arrive at the fixture, give all a pleasant greeting, and then remain to be inspected by your field. You have probably gained many adherents during cub-hunting, but there are others who see you now for the first time, and you may be certain every detail of the whole turn-out is being thoroughly criticised—you hope favourably. At five minutes past the hour you trot leisurely off to the covert that is always drawn on the opening-day, and is situated in the middle of your best country: the first whip in front and the second behind, who have had orders previously to see the space for hounds is not encroached upon by the field.

The covert is twelve acres of gorse and blackthorn, not very thick in places, but with plenty of brambles and long grass to make good lying for a fox. You station your field on the upwind side, direct the whips where to stand, and then throw hounds in. There is a narrow ride down the centre of the covert, and to this you make your way, all the time letting hounds hear your voice and encouraging them to try. Where the undergrowth is thickest you give them more time to draw, and when you enter the ride you

take care that none are following at your horse's heels.

My reasons for advising drawing small coverts down-wind are, first of all, that a fox should not be chopped, and secondly, that it gives a good fox the opportunity of going away in the direction for which he is certain to make ultimately. I know many huntsmen like to get their fox away up-wind ; but he is sure to turn in a field or two, and then hounds go from good conditions to bad, which puts them in a worse position than if they had started down-wind. By starting down-wind a fox is much more likely to go straight and make a good point ; then, as he becomes tired, every turn he makes will be in favour of hounds. I also maintain that hounds will run faster down-wind with a fox that does not turn, than the contrary way with one which is always twisting.

It is three weeks or more since last hounds were in this covert during cub-hunting ; but you remember the spot where the big dog-fox was lying on that occasion, and you have a fancy he may be there again to-day. You would like, if possible, to have a good gallop on your first

day, and you have an idea that old fox will run straight. Consequently you ride straight up to the spot you are thinking of—a patch of rough tussocky grass, guarded on three sides by a screen of blackthorn, and open on the south to catch the fleeting warmth of a winter's sun. He is there sure enough to-day, and as your vigorous tally-ho reaches his ear, he gives a whisk of his well-tagged brush and disappears amongst the thorns. All the hounds near at hand fly to your cheer and are soon in hot pursuit, making the undergrowth crackle as they force their way through it. Meanwhile another portion of the pack have a fox on foot elsewhere, but you are determined to go away with the first that leaves whatever happens. The old fox at once recognises the danger of staying long in covert with such a good scent, and, after dodging once or twice to gain time, he slips quietly away on the down-wind side, whilst his enemies are for the moment at fault. Will, the first whip, blows his whistle, and you know at once what has happened.

Now is the time to use your voice if you have one, and if hounds have confidence in you they will flock to your heels as you hasten through

the covert into the open. A couple having heard the whistle are already on the line, and you gallop up with the others to join them, blowing your horn to let the loiterers and the field know you are away.

You were right to make a certain amount of noise coming out of covert so that every hound might hear, but now they are 'all on' you had best be quiet. Hounds are very excitable at the start, and if excited still more by much halloaing, they will be half a mile beyond the scent the first time the fox turns.

There is little, however, to bother you now; the second whip was very smart in stopping the portion of the pack that were on another line in covert, and not one has been left behind. A straight-necked fox is in front of you, and hounds are racing with an apparently breast-high scent. Your one object now is to keep the leading hound in view, and to this end you ride some forty yards on one side of the pack. These are not the sort of fences you have been accustomed to in the fashionable countries, and you must ride with judgment if you intend to be with hounds. Unknown to you, a reputation for hard

riding has followed you, and half a dozen of the best men this little provincial hunt can produce are anxious to test your powers, and would be delighted to see you pounded. Fortunately you are riding the best in the stable, and a few little darts in cub-hunting have taught him that the banks are rotten and not to be trusted; but most of the fences are on the level, and are straggling, unkempt obstructions, with an occasional ditch rather wider than you expect to find. This country a few years ago was all under plough, but through the depression in farming most of it has been allowed to lay itself down to grass, and now generally carries a scent, though it may not carry a large head of stock.

What a pace hounds run! what a head they carry! They seem to skim over the yellowy-brown surface; the bastard turf, made up of twitch and coarse herbage, answers the purpose of the best old turf. This is as good as a gallop over the cream of Leicestershire, and here are only ten men competing. When the pack run fast and straight, it matters not what the country is like if you can only get over it, and you have never enjoyed yourself more than at this moment.

Away on the ridge to the right there is a hammering of iron-shod hoofs on the road, and you catch a glimpse of the crowd hurrying on to some point. There is a wood of twenty acres in that direction, and according to all precedent it is for there a fox should make, but to-day the calculations of the knowing ones will be upset.

We have thus far been galloping over a sort of flat table-land, which now begins to descend gradually and ends, as far as you can see, in a narrow vale—a strip of green with a grey church-tower in the middle. Up to now you have met nothing which your horse could not cover with ease in his stride, but what is this thicket in front? It is the boundary hedge that divides two parishes, a huge wall of thorn and young trees that shut out the landscape beyond, with a yawning ditch on either side. The autumn leaves have not yet fallen, and you must guess what lies behind the screen, but from the lie of the land you feel certain there is a drop. The field, after a moment's hesitation, have dashed off to follow one of their number who turned away directly he recognised the obstacle. Hounds have already disappeared through the leafy barrier, and you mean to be with them. At present you

can see no spot where a glint of daylight shows weakness, but you remember your old creed that every fence has a feasible place. Then, as you approach nearer, the spot is all at once revealed, where the thorn is replaced by a weakly growth of alder. Sitting down in the saddle and getting plenty of pace on, you ride manfully at it. The rush lands you on top of the bank, and crash through the fence. Then for the fraction of a second you seem to hang on the edge of a bottomless gulf, but your horse's Irish education comes to his aid, as with a slide and a spring he lands safely into the next field. It matters not that your face is bleeding, your ears stinging, and your coat torn, for you are with hounds once more and therefore happy.

The soil now changes and becomes more of a sandy nature, which has an effect on scent, and the pace slackens a trifle; but there are worse things to be seen ahead, and you fear the result. A couple of fields of old seeds and one of growing turnips carry a fair scent, but beyond them are two big bare fields, reeking with the smell of dung and of decaying turnips. On the right-hand a huge flock of sheep are folded and the shepherd

is there now, but he has not seen the fox. Of course, you must hold the pack forward beyond the stained ground, but it reaches for some distance in front and to the left—the fox must have been turned slightly to the left by the shepherd. Your whip did not follow you at the double, and you are still alone, so that you will have to make the cast without assistance. Every hound has now got his head up, and the hopelessness of trying to hunt across this tainted soil is apparent. You make a rapid calculation, and decide on a bold cast forward to some seeds half a mile away, that lie beyond the belt of plough. You are doing a very risky thing, for hounds have covered some four miles in fifteen minutes, and the fox must be blown, in which condition he is likely to turn short either way, or possibly double back. Whistling to the pack, who are quite ready to follow you, you canter forward with them over the two fields where the turnips have been, then over a freshly ploughed fallow, and crossing a road you reach the seeds. Beginning nearly opposite to where the shepherd stood, you cast down to the left, parallel with the road. You know there is a fair scent under ordinary conditions, and as this

is good ground, you may cast there moderately fast. One or two of the old hounds are drawing on like pointers, feeling for a scent which they know is not far away, and then suddenly they dash forward, the whole pack wheel into line, and the next second they are flying on as fast as ever.

Beyond the seeds are two large stubble-fields, the arable district is left behind, and you suddenly find yourself on the fringe of the vale. A richer soil, grass of a deeper green, and fences of alarming strength. These are pastures of an older generation, and round each enclosure the whitethorn has grown, with the aid of man, into a hedge that controls the summer vagaries of the gadding bullock. Occasionally an ox-rail guards one side, and not infrequently both, whilst the ditch is certain to be there. A few seconds' respite on the turnip-ground gave your horse an opportunity of getting his second wind, and he now seems as fresh as ever, but you feel very thankful that most of his forebears are recorded in the stud-book. He is a good horse, and you know he can be depended on to do his best, but it is a high trial getting into such a stiff country at this period of the run. You must save him all you can, picking out all the

smallest places, and yet without going out of the way.

Hounds are driving along now at a tremendous pace over the old turf, and there is not a sign of one tailing off. You are delighted with the result of your kennel management, with summer conditioning and autumn education. This is the moment when you reap the fruits of all your care and labour. In spite of the severity of the pace, neither old nor young show the least symptoms of flagging.

The fiery flame of excitement with which you started the gallop has now settled down to a steady glowing heat. Every nerve and faculty is strained to its utmost tension to attain one end—the death of the fox. Your thirst for blood has grown from a faint desire to a raging fever.

With one eye on the pack and the other roaming the country ahead for a sight of the form that shall gladden your heart, you have little time to note the fences you are jumping, or otherwise you might hesitate to ride at some of them with a fast tiring horse. He is skimming the binders unpleasantly close, and he clears the ditches with very little to spare.

Steady now! Watch the pack as they run down that hedgerow on your right. You will notice that a young hound is leading and that most of the old are following on, as it were under protest. The fox, I think, has run down to the angle where two hedges meet, and, finding no convenient hole, has doubled back to a stile which he passed on the way. Under ordinary conditions you would be right in casting the pack forward, but now you have no whip. Some of the old hounds are already trying back, and if they don't hit it off, you can then get forward with them, but they will run all the better if they can recover it without your assistance. Old 'Rhapsody,' making use of the footboard, hops lightly over the stile, and proclaims the line down the footpath beyond. Foxes seldom run paths except when tired.

'Forrard! forrard! little bitches!' A cheer now will do no harm, if the pack know the difference in your voice between when you are cheering them on a scent and you are giving them a view.

The line of stiles leads to that grey spire which you saw some time ago, and which is now less than half a mile away. There are hoarse yells and shrill screams ahead. You see people rushing

and frantically waving their arms. Your eye travels quickly in the direction indicated and absorbs every detail. See ! yonder goes the fox, stealing along under that high fence to the right. They have headed him at the village, there is only a field between you now, and this is the time to give the pack a view. Hounds are for the moment at fault where some cart colts have galloped over the line, and your opportunity has come. With a quiet 'Here, come along,' you catch hold of the pack and lift them forward. You meet the fox as he emerges from the shadow of the tall hedge, having cut off a corner. Now for a tally-ho and a scream from your heart. Up go their heads and they get a view. He doubles through the fence, gets a moment's respite, and then makes straight for the brook below like the gallant fox he is. Hounds, though, are not to be denied ; they view him again as he rises dripping from the brook, and race him up the next field. Nothing could stop you at this supreme moment, but twelve feet of water at the end of such a gallop is a high trial for any horse. You get over with a scramble, and are alongside of hounds as they run into their fox in the middle of a grass field.

Forty minutes by your watch to the second, and an inspection later of the map makes it a six-mile point. Your horse, with loosened girths, is being led about by a boy, and you are holding the fox above the baying pack, when your whip, followed by three or four of the field, turns up. Don't keep hounds waiting too long for their fox; tantalise them for a moment or two to increase their keenness, and then throw him up.

This is the sort of gallop that will only occasionally fall to your lot, but you must be sanguine enough to hope for the best every time you go out, and yet content when the reality does not come up to your expectations. Luck is a very important factor in fox-hunting, and there are many things to spoil your sport over which you can have no control, but with a decent pack of hounds in first-rate condition, you will not often have to complain of fate.

Keep your hounds well in blood, and if they go more than three days without killing, you must not go home on the fourth day until you have by some means got hold of a fox. I think I cannot do better than quote you here what Beckford says:—'When hounds are out of blood

there is a kind of evil genius attending all that they do; and though they may seem to hunt as well as ever, they do not get forward; while a pack of foxhounds well in blood, like troops flushed with conquest, are not easily withstood.' This is an indisputable fact now, and was probably equally true when these words were first written more than a hundred years ago.

At the finish of the gallop, which we have just brought to a successful conclusion, you lifted hounds to meet the fox. In this operation you were running a certain amount of risk, and it would be as well you remembered this for future occasions. You had no whip with you, and if the fox had heard or seen you coming, and had laid down in the fence, the pack would probably have run heel, and you would have lost your fox. A tired fox often escapes at the moment when the huntsman thinks he is going to handle him, and it is generally the result of too much halloaing or the man losing his head. A fox never gives up a chance of saving his life, and until he is dead he is always liable to defeat you. Never halloa in such a manner as to excite hounds or get their heads up, unless you are certain of being

able to give them a view. You must take every advantage you can of a fox, and keep the pack as near to him as possible; but when they are running well you must use your own judgment about lifting them forward. You have to take into consideration the pace they are running, the corner that is to be cut off, and the amount of time to be thus saved. Then you have to allow for a loss of time in stopping hounds when they are running, and a further loss before they again settle to the scent. No rule can be laid down, as in every instance there will be some slight difference, and the huntsman must decide the point for himself. The man of moderate ability and slight experience should, however, remember the old proverb 'to leave well alone.'

When a fox has been bustled along smartly at any period of the run, you should never give him up whilst daylight lasts, as you may be certain he will stop, and if there is any scent at all you may possibly hunt up to him. It is at these times that hounds out of blood will not persevere, and when there is a slight improvement in scent they do not make the most of it. The huntsman must then supply perseverance

for both, and if he is successful, he will be fully rewarded for his trouble the next time the pack are out hunting. When the master does not carry the horn he may on an occasion of this kind become weary of dragging on, and by all means then let him go home; but he should allow his huntsman to persevere, if that official thinks he has the slightest chance of catching his fox.

One of the most frequent and annoying causes for hounds checking is the intervention of a sheep-dog. When it is evident that a dog has chased the fox, you should immediately make a wide cast forward and get beyond the point where the dog stopped. The sudden fright either causes the fox's scent to change or otherwise leaves him altogether, but the smell of the dog, mingling with that of the fox, is also partly responsible for the check, and the same result is seen when one hound gets ahead of the rest. It is a bad plan to encourage hounds to hunt after one of their own number, or where a dog has been coursing the fox, as it teaches the young hounds to hunt dog. Of course when one hound does get away from the others, and you do not know where he is, you are obliged to let them hunt up to him;

but avoid it if you possibly can, and send a whip on to stop him. There are one or two runs on record where the object of pursuit has been a cur, and some men might think it fun if they had a gallop; but no good sportsman or any one who cared about hounds could look upon such an event as anything except a disaster.

There are days when even the most steady hounds seem ready to run anything, and the same pack a day or two later will take no notice of the scent they had previously been anxious to hunt. I suppose there is something in the air which prevents them distinguishing the smell of the fox from that of other animals, but they will on occasions descend even to birds, and I have seen reliable hounds run both pheasants and partridges.

I think nothing of a hound running a wrong scent for a few yards, or even half a field, if he does not speak to it, for the instinct of a well-bred foxhound teaches him to get forward without loss of time, and he may be only following this line up until he can be sure he is right or wrong. You will see that in a case of this kind it behoves you to be careful how you cheer



Ben Capell.

Huntsman to Belvoir.

hounds on. There are some people who seem to think that when a hound puts his head down and waves his stern, he must be either on the line of a fox, or be himself a false rogue. I do not look at it in that light. When a hound is sniffing with his nose on the ground, all he means by that waving stern is that he has found a scent, and that for the moment he cannot tell you what it is, but if you will only be quiet for a minute he will let you know. Therefore, if you see a single hound feathering on some line, and yet not able to speak to it, take the rest of the pack up to him, but say nothing either in the form of encouragement or reproof. When a reliable hound throws his tongue, it will be quite soon enough for you to cheer the others on. Of course I am supposing you have no mute ones in the pack, otherwise it will be difficult to tell whether they are or are not on a fox; but when you have any of these sinners you and your whips must keep a sharp look-out, never letting a hound get far away from the main body.

I had thought of devoting a whole chapter to scent, but have come to the conclusion that as we know so little about the subject it is best left

unwritten. With a gently rising glass and some moisture on the ground you can generally depend on scent being good, but there have been too many exceptions under those conditions to make it a rule. With a falling glass and half a gale blowing, we do not expect to see hounds run, but to our surprise they will sometimes run faster on these occasions than when the weather has been apparently favourable. Taking the barometer as a means of indicating the day most likely to give a good scent, I should choose it to be rather low and rising. My experience leads me to think that when the glass is very high or low, or when it is actually falling, is the time when in all probability scent will be bad. Please observe, I make no rule and lay down no law.

I am quite certain every fox has a different scent; and as each human being has his own smell, why not the fox? You may be walking with half a dozen other men, and your dog may have loitered behind, but you will be very disgusted with him, if you leave the others, and when he comes to the spot where you parted with your friends, he cannot detect his master's smell from the others. The idea that we each

have our own individual smell, however clean we may be, is repugnant to some; but I do not see why it should be looked upon in that light, and I am quite sure no healthy man is without it. By generations of disuse we have lost the delicate perception of our smelling organs, and it is only the grosser scents now that can touch our nerves. I believe the sense of smell reflects on the brain quicker than either that of hearing, seeing, or feeling, and also leaves a stronger impression. We can all remember an instance of some peculiar scent recalling a long-forgotten scene, a time, or a face with which the smell was associated.

I have, however, nothing to do with this subject as it affects the human being, except to remind the man that he, with the combined smell of himself and horse, is likely to destroy the poor little fox's modest scent, if he gets too near the line. My object in referring to the individuality and difference in the scent of the same species, is to show that hounds should be able to distinguish the line of their hunted fox from that of another. Young hounds and those that are out of blood are careless about these shades of

difference, and the stronger the scent, the better they like it. A pack that is well in blood, not by chopping foxes in covert, but after long and hard runs, is able to appreciate that its success has been gained by sticking to one scent, whether it be weak or strong. I think a fox's scent changes and grows weaker as he becomes exhausted, which is proved by the old hounds then running at the head. The young are not tired, but they do not recognise what the change in scent portends, and only notice that the delicious perfume which thrilled their nerves at first has lost some of its power. You will see by this argument that it is most important you should keep your hounds to one fox, and not allow them to change until you have either lost or killed. Of course, you might say that is every huntsman's object; but both professional and amateur generally wish to oblige the field, so that when a hunt is becoming tedious you gallop off to another covert. There is no harm in a huntsman wishing the followers of the hunt to enjoy themselves, but he must not sacrifice the welfare of his pack to that wish. He would probably like a smart gallop as much as any one; but if he

has run one fox for any length of time, he should never give him up whilst daylight lasts. I do not blame the field for wanting a gallop, and getting heartily sick of a slow dragging hunt; but I do blame the huntsman for allowing himself to be persuaded to relinquish a hunt when he has a faint chance of catching his fox.

Halloas are at all times to be regarded with extreme care, as they will very often be the means of putting you on the line of a fresh fox; but you must take advantage of them occasionally, and when you have any doubt, you had better send a whip on to make inquiries.

I have endeavoured to prove that the hound possesses the power of distinguishing one scent from the other, and our task is to instil into him that by noting this distinction and adhering to one line, he is most likely to catch his fox. His instinct teaches him to run a scent, but his education and power of reasoning must teach him the best way of attaining the desired end. If you object to animals being credited with a reasoning power, then give it another name, but my stock of language does not supply me with any other word. The boundary-line between

instinct and reason is difficult to define. However tender-nosed a hound may be, he will very seldom develop a capacity for hunting a road until he is in his third or fourth season. A good road hound is not of so much importance in the pursuit of the fox as in that of the hare, but he is very useful sometimes. You will see the whole pack at fault on a road and one hound will go gaily on throwing his tongue, whilst the others can make nothing of it; but yet this hound will not be noted for any greater excellence in the fields. Why is this? I have no answer to this question; but I imagine there is much less scent on a road, and also that the different surface entirely changes its character. The majority of the pack are confused by this change; but the one hound, having more reasoning power than his fellows, has noticed the change on previous occasions, and makes allowance when it occurs again. Hounds differ in their individual characters quite as much as human beings, and though one that is a fool may have an excellent nose, he will never shine above the others in his work. One of the greatest objections against breeding hounds too close is that their brain-power becomes reduced.

I have still a few more words to say on the subject of scent, from which we seem to have drifted into a discussion on other things. The two elements which have the greatest effect on scent are atmosphere and soil, but in what way they act for good or evil no one yet has been able to determine. We know that a light, sandy, or very porous soil is bad for scent, but we do not know why. My idea is that these soils are, unless flooded with wet, always absorbing moisture from the air, and that they draw down scent at the same time. A clay soil absorbs moisture very slowly, except arable land that has no crop and in exceptionally dry weather. I should say that the most favourable time for hounds to run is when the atmosphere is in such a state that it is nearly of the same weight as scent, with just a slight leaning to the light side. When the fox or other animal starts off, his scent is left in a little cloud behind him, which, when it and the air are nearly of the same weight, sinks very gradually to the ground. Then, if it falls on grazing ground, it will cling for some time to the herbage, whilst that falling on a dry, barren surface will quickly disappear. Of course, when

the air is the heaviest, your scent will disappear skywards, and your only chance of a run is to keep near your fox. On those days, which occur once in two or three seasons, when hounds can race over every kind of country and every variety of soil, I believe that air and scent have just happened to be evenly balanced. It is quite easy to understand that the chance cannot occur often, as with two such light materials, the slightest difference must turn the scales either way.

Sheep, cattle, and horses all destroy scent, or rather, I should say, they confuse the hounds by mixing up their own strong smell with that of the fox. I think it does hounds good to occasionally let them hunt out a cold line, but not when there are other scents combined with that of the fox. Manure, artificial and otherwise, is strong enough for us to smell, and it therefore must get in the hound's nostrils and overpower the faint scent of an animal. When you see that any of the above causes have brought the pack to a check, do not wait for them to cast themselves or puzzle it out, but lift them forward at once beyond the affected area. When, how-

ever, you can see nothing that you think likely to have affected the scent, it is better to leave hounds alone, as with a very weak scent they will not be inclined to stoop again after you have once got their heads up.

At the time when a frost is going off scent is generally supposed to be bad, and later in the same day, when the frost is all gone, you will notice a marked improvement. Fox-hunting is not carried on in a hard frost, but in my experience with beagles hunting a hare, I have known some extraordinarily good scents when the ground has been as hard as iron.

I have set down a few facts concerning scent, and have advanced a few theories, but I shall leave it to you to draw your own conclusions. Never be disheartened because a day looks unpropitious according to all the rules you have ever heard, and if there is no scent in the morning, hope for better luck in the afternoon. Every one who has ever hunted has some pet idea about scent, which, however, he is certain to see confounded before the end of his experience. Tom Firr disliked seeing a blue mist, and, I think, many other huntsmen consider it an ill omen, but

they must have occasionally seen hounds run fast with it on the horizon. My ideal day would be without a blue mist, or a haze of any kind; a grey sky looking down on a clear landscape, with the fences outlined black and sharp against the green of the fields; then a gentle breeze should be blowing, cool and damp, from any other point of the compass except the west. Such is the day I would choose for hunting, and very probably it would turn out to be the worst scenting-day of the season.

An approaching storm will destroy scent, and when the squall has passed it will be as good as ever again. We know that the fermentation of milk is caused by a bacillus, and yet a thunder-storm will cause milk to turn sour in a few minutes. May not the scent be swallowed up by the numerous bacteria in the air, and may not the storm hasten that result in the same way it does with milk? The writer of *An Essay on Hunting* (already referred to) has brought the suggestion into my mind, and I must therefore give him the credit. His chapter on scent should be read by those interested in the subject.

It is impossible to lay down fixed rules for

any one's guidance in hunting, as one cannot foresee the circumstances that will arise or the events that have led up to a particular point; but there are certain general principles to work upon, and beyond these the beginner must use his own judgment. In making a cast, the huntsman, if there is no master, should first of all beg his field to stand still, and he should then proceed at a pace justified by the scent before the check. He should not go so fast that hounds cannot try as they go, and when one or two stop to feather, he should not allow his whip to drive them on. You may gallop hounds across a scent without them ever knowing it was there, and unless as a last resource you are casting to a point some distance away, it is a good rule never to take hounds off their noses. Always let the pack make their own cast first, unless they are doing it among the horses or where the people have been riding about, and then get them on clean ground at once. It is better not to cast too wide at first, as the greater the radius of your semi-circle, the longer it will take for you to make it. A forward cast is desirable, because if the fox has turned aside to avoid a man, or for some other reason, and he is

one of the straight-necked sort, he is certain to resume his original direction. When hounds come to a drain or earth and seem inclined to stop, hold them forward, because if you do not hit the line again, you can always come back. A fox will often go into an earth and come out again, finding it too hot to be pleasant, and will also go through a drain, coming out at the other end. Therefore it behoves you to make your ground good forward, before you decide that your fox has stopped. When you do run to ground, get off your horse, stay some little time, and cheer your hounds to bay him. Of course, if you can get him out, do it by all means, and when you have had a fairly long run, see that he does not escape. Your field's desire for a kill has cooled down, and they will be for letting the fox get away, but you must think of your hounds and not attend to the cry for mercy.

Unless a huntsman rides up to his pack, he will often miss seeing the cause that made them check, and will consequently be at a disadvantage. There are a great many people who go out hunting who never know whether hounds have the scent or not, and if the huntsman is not there, they will press

them far beyond where they have had the line. Those men whose ambition takes them into the front rank, ought to watch the leading hounds as carefully as the man who hunts them, and pull up at the slightest hesitation. If this were always done, we should enjoy many good runs which are now spoiled by the whole field galloping over the line, led on by the thoughtless man in front.

In making a cast I like to see the huntsman have his pack abreast and outside him, not following on at his heels, for his horse will destroy the scent as much as any other. They will soon learn to understand and obey a wave of the arm, and should work for you like a well-broken setter. Whips are too fond of hurrying the pack after the huntsman when he is casting, and they seem to think a hound ought to find the scent without ever stooping his head. When hounds are being cast, they should be spread out in open order, so that each has a piece of fresh ground to try on. A whip should use his own common sense, and when he sees a hound stopping behind the others, apparently busy puzzling something out, he should give him time to make certain. This latter remark applies only to the occasion when the

huntsman is casting round to cross the scent, not to when he is holding them forward.

With a fair pack of hounds, a good scent and a straight fox, the work of a huntsman is comparatively light, but it is not often these conditions are met with on the same day. It is in the case of a failing scent, a fox that is a long way ahead, and over fields dotted with cattle, that the huntsman with genius comes to the front. The moderate man gets farther and farther behind his fox until he has to give it up, whilst a master of the craft is ever pushing on, until at last his skill and cunning reach a triumphant conclusion.

Amongst those who have not studied the subject, there has grown up an idea which is utterly opposed to the true principles of fox-hunting. The idea is that a fox should be hunted to death, which of course is quite wrong. A foxhound should never be allowed to hunt, when there is a chance of him running or of getting him nearer to his fox. This erroneous impression is not a thing of recent birth, but has been handed down by some old fox-hunter who began life by following the hare, and who could never forget his early training. This old fellow posed as an authority,

and the false gospel he preached has disciples even to this day. To better define the two sports, we should speak of them as hare-*hunting* and fox-*running*. Slow hunting and the puzzling out of a line is very pretty to watch, but those who want to see it should go out with hare-hounds, and not wish to debase the foxhound's character. The principle of fox-hunting is to get away after your fox as quickly as you can, and to use every means in your power to keep near him. The huntsman should start off as soon as there is five or six couple on the line, and if he keeps his horn going, the rest will quickly catch him up. There are some men who like to wait till all the hounds are out of covert and then lay them on, but that to me savours too much of the old hare-hunter. The first man who understood the principles of fox-hunting, recognising the difference of the two pursuits, and recording it in his immortal work, was Peter Beckford. I will quote you a passage from his book to show that my ideas of the way the game should be played are in accordance with this great authority. He says: 'A pack of harriers will kill a cub, better perhaps than a

pack of foxhounds; but when foxes are strong they have not the method of getting on with the scent which foxhounds have, and generally tire themselves before the fox. To kill foxes when they are strong, hounds must run as well as hunt: besides, catching a fox by hard running is always preferred in the opinion of a fox-hunter.' Then he goes on to say that he considers fox-hunting ought to be a 'lively, animated, and eager pursuit'; and again, that 'eagerness and impetuosity are such essential parts of this diversion, that I am never more surprised than when I see a fox-hunter without them.' There are many other passages which I could quote, but every one who is interested in hunting should himself read the book. Beckford no doubt chronicled his own opinions and ideas, but they must have been shared by other well-known authorities of the period; so that when we refer to the hare-hunting style as the method of hunting a fox in ancient days, we are making a mistake and casting a slur on our ancestors.

As I have said, with a failing scent and a fox only 'half-beat,' a huntsman must exercise all his science and skill to achieve the desired end. He

must press hounds on without lifting them, never taking them off their noses, and yet never suffering them to dwell more than a moment in one spot. He must, as it were, feel his way forward, never losing a second and yet never hurrying. Hounds that are allowed to potter about in one place get into a slow habit of hunting, and are almost useless, unless they see the error of their ways. When there is a very good scent, a pack of beagles or harriers will run and drive in the very best style, but it is the principal virtue and predominant characteristic of the well-bred foxhound, to get forward with and make the most of an indifferent scent. The beagle would probably beat the foxhound at puzzling out a cold line, and if that is what you want to see, I advise you to get a pack of the former to hunt your foxes. You would not kill many, but you would get plenty of hunting, and you would seldom require to draw more than one covert in the day. The art of pressing hounds on and getting them forward without letting them lift their noses from the ground, can only be learned by those who are born with the hunting instinct, but even then it will be no use to them unless

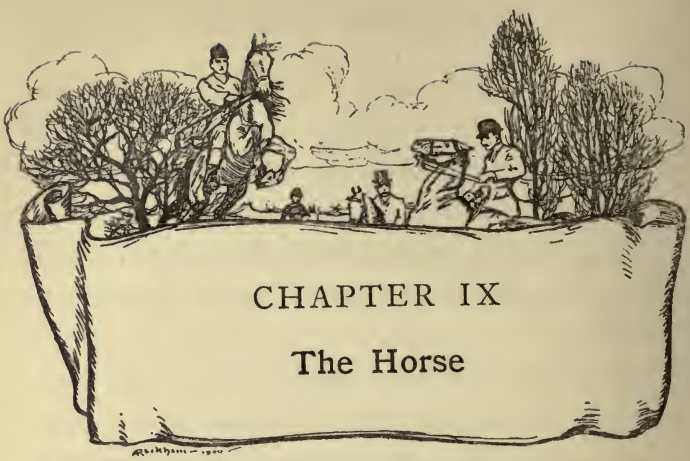
they have developed the power by careful training and varied experience.

Halloas are snares and pitfalls to deceive the unwary huntsman. There is always the probability it is a fresh fox; it may be a boy scaring crows, and very often it is nothing at all. When you make up your mind to go to a halloa, go at once, and get there as quick as you can, but when you are in doubt send your whip on. Of course, a halloa is very useful sometimes, and when it comes at the right moment it may help you to kill your fox, but generally it is not to be depended upon.

If through ill-luck, bad scenting-days, or other causes, it happens that your hounds are out of blood, you must go out every day with the full intention of persevering until you achieve success You will have to work harder than the pack, who in all probability will at the critical moment show signs of throwing up the sponge. You will want to curse them, but you must keep your temper, and with persistent perseverance hold them to the line. Over plough, cattle-stained ground, and ground covered with manure, you should hold hounds forward and not lift

them, doing it in such a way that they do not realise they are obeying your will, and only think they are following up their own cast. In this way you will get them on to clean ground, feeling for the scent as they go, and giving you little hints now and then as to the direction of the line.

When your fox is quite 'beat,' leave your hounds alone altogether, as there is very little scent at that time, and he may lie down or hide anywhere. At this period of the run you must never get your hounds' heads up, unless you can make certain of giving them a view.



CHAPTER IX

The Horse

THE pleasures of fox-hunting being largely dependent on the horse you ride, I think it will not be out of place here to discuss the animal and its peculiarities.

The country you intend to hunt in, your weight, your method of riding, and your pocket, have all to be considered in making a choice. So much depends on the man himself, that no hard and fast rule can be laid down. A horse will go perfectly with one man, that would be absolutely useless in the hands of another. I should advise the beginner who has the ways of life made easy by a well-filled purse, and who has only a superficial knowledge of horse-flesh, to put himself in the hands of some well-known dealer,



A Bit of Leicestershire

but it should be distinctly understood that a horse is to be returned if not liked. Under these circumstances it is absurd for the neophyte to pit his knowledge against that of the man whose business it is to know everything about a horse. Let him go to the dealer and say, 'I want so many hunters to carry me safely and well over a certain country.' Ask him to fix a figure on each horse he shows you, and when he has put a price on about double the number you require, then proceed to make your selection. Ride each one in turn, gallop them downhill, and jump them over a few small fences. You may conclude that those which give you a pleasant feeling, which do not seem as if they were going to tumble on their heads when landing over the fences (and in fact leave the impression of a well-balanced rocking-chair), have good shoulders. Don't bother your head about splints, curbs, spavins, or any other defect you may read about, but insist on having good shoulders. Leave the question of the animal's capabilities and education as a hunter entirely to the honour of the dealer; put your trust in the veterinary surgeon you employ to examine about all matters of sound-

ness and age; but decide for yourself what you like, and do not be persuaded to buy a horse that does not seem comfortable to ride. If you buy only horses with really good shoulders, you will never get any very bad falls. Dealers cannot afford to be particular about shoulders themselves, and they are rather inclined to wilfully shut their eyes to this defect when they are selling. Never hazard an opinion about whether shoulders look right or not, and never condemn them in words, but merely say you do not quite like the 'feel' of the horse, and pass on to the next. Do not enter into a discussion with a dealer about a horse's good or bad points, because you are nearly certain to be convinced against your own opinions, but pick out those you like, and buy them, if the dealer recommends them as good performers. A sensible head and a generous bold eye are points that the least 'horsey' of men can judge for themselves, and they are of no little importance in determining the animal's character.

The poor man, or the man of moderate means, will have to proceed with the purchasing of his horses in a different manner, but here it is very

difficult to advise without knowing the exact price the man can give, and how bad a rider he is. A horse with four good sound legs, and a character of being a genuine performer, but a slight whistler, will enable the beginner to see some sport, and at the same time teach him how to ride. If he has a friend in whose judgment he has confidence, he should ask his advice about any horses that are going to be sold by auction, and with a little trouble he may get hold of decent animals at low prices. Remember that people send horses up to auction to sell them, and want to get as much money as they can, and beware of letting out to anybody except your one friend that you are a possible purchaser.

A horse that is up to fourteen stone, has plenty of quality, and is a good performer over a country, with the addition of manners, is worth from one hundred and fifty to three hundred pounds, but anything outside the range of that degree of excellence has no certain market value. The seller's idea of his horse's value is always higher than that of the buyer, and we must not blame the former for getting the best price he

can. In the same way the buyer must give as little as possible, and he is not to be blamed for giving a much lower price than the owner thinks the animal is worth. With most other things there is a fixed value, and it would be dishonest to sell at a much higher or to buy at a much lower price.

A horse-dealing transaction is supposed to lead the most straightforward man from the path of honesty, but I do not see any reason for him being thus led astray. The man who gets the worst of a bargain is very liable to say or think he has been cheated, forgetting that he has used all his special knowledge to turn the balance in his favour, and has tried his utmost to get the better of the other party.

In my opinion, the ethics of horse-dealing are as plain as in any other business, and the only complication is when men try to deal without having any experience in the trade. There is hardly any man who has ever been astride of a horse who does not think himself a competent judge of the animal's good and bad points. This little conceit generally costs money before the man is fully aware of his own ignorance,

and he is inclined to blame others for the result instead of himself. If it pleases and amuses you to enter into the arena with sharper wits than yourself, you must not cry out when you are worsted in the encounter. Use all your powers to buy at the lowest possible price and to sell at the highest, but do not misrepresent or state things that are untrue, and you will have nothing to reproach yourself with afterwards. If you say a horse is sound when you know him to be otherwise, you are cheating, and are little better than a pickpocket.

Different countries, as I have said, require a different stamp of horse, but I prefer a preponderance of the thoroughbred blood, whether the land be grass or plough. I think the well-bred ones take longer to learn their business than the others, but when once they take to jumping they are the pleasantest mounts, and are only cantering when the cock-tails are galloping.

There are so many books on the horse now, that every one knows what the perfect animal should be like, but I may as well give you my ideas. To begin with, I prefer a big bold eye in a sensible head, which is set on to a neck that

is moderately thick and not too long. Sloping shoulders, a strong loin and powerful quarters are essential qualities in a hunter. In addition to these I like a deep girth, ribs with an outward spring, short flat legs, and muscular thighs. Hocks should be large, clean, and flat. Small weak fetlock-joints are to be avoided. I do not mind the shape of quarters, but they must have length and strength one way or the other.

Whyte-Melville said that a man should never indulge in the luxury of shoulders until he was past forty, but it seems to me that by following this advice there is every probability of his not reaching that age. A broken neck effectually prevents a man from following hounds, and it is not more welcome at twenty-five than it is at fifty. If a young man rides only perfect hunters, he will never improve in his horsemanship, and he will never become first-class over a country. By all means let him ride every variety he can get hold of, both of the unmade and the unmannerly, but the bad-shouldered horse should be left severely alone and allowed to follow the vocation of harness, for which nature has fitted him.

We all know when a horse has perfect shoulders or when they are very bad, but it is the different degrees in between which we dispute over. What do we mean when we speak of a horse having good shoulders? The idea is that when the animal has a certain slope of shoulder, he will not turn over with you, however often he may fall. The whole secret lies in *balance*. A horse that is perfectly balanced will never give you a really bad fall, and will never be a really hard puller. A good horseman with light hands can rectify the balance to a certain extent if the error is only slight. Seat yourself on a child's rocking-horse, just a trifle in front of the centre of balance, and then proceed to rock. You will find that every forward movement brings you up with a jar that shakes both you and your wooden steed. That is exactly what happens to the ill-balanced horse in jumping a fence, the whole strain coming on the forelegs, so that it is easy to understand the difficulty of recovering after a stumble. The balance is very seldom the other way, and when it is means no particular discomfort to the rider, but merely more exertion to the horse in jumping. You will perceive

this by sitting a little back on the rocking-horse, which you will then find requires considerable strength to make it rock. Has it ever occurred to you to speculate why women's horses very seldom fall, and why a woman requires a much stronger horse in comparison than a man? I believe the reason for both facts is, that the position on a side-saddle throws the rider's centre of gravity behind the horse's centre of balance and keeps it there, so that, however badly a horse may stumble, there is no extra weight in front to prevent his recovery. The same cause subjects the animal's quarters and propelling power to a greater strain than when the weight is in the middle, as it is in the position a man rides, hence the necessity for a strong horse to carry a woman.

Good shoulders and balance are not quite one and the same thing, as I have known one to exist without the other. A good shoulder may, however, be called the basis on which nearly every even balance is built up, and the only way to make certain the former is right, is to satisfy yourself about the condition of the latter.

America has recognised this balance theory,

and the jockey Sloan has opened the eyes of English race-goers by putting it to the test. His system of riding is to take all his weight from the horse's hindquarters and throw it forward. In a flat race over a smooth course this must make it easier for the horse, and when there are only a few pounds' weight between the different horses competing, it is not surprising that the jockey who alone follows this plan should score many successes. Whether the horses ridden in this manner suffer in their forelegs more than those ridden in the ordinary way, is a question that could best be answered by the trainers.

It would require tremendous nerve to adopt the Sloan system for steeplechasing, and of course for hunting it would be out of the question.

Sloan has proved to us that the even balance which we think absolutely necessary in a hunter is out of place in a racehorse. Herein lies the danger of breeding from stallions whose sole recommendation is a good record on the turf. You see occasionally a well-balanced thoroughbred, but the majority of those that win races have a shortened forehand with extra length and strength behind the saddle.

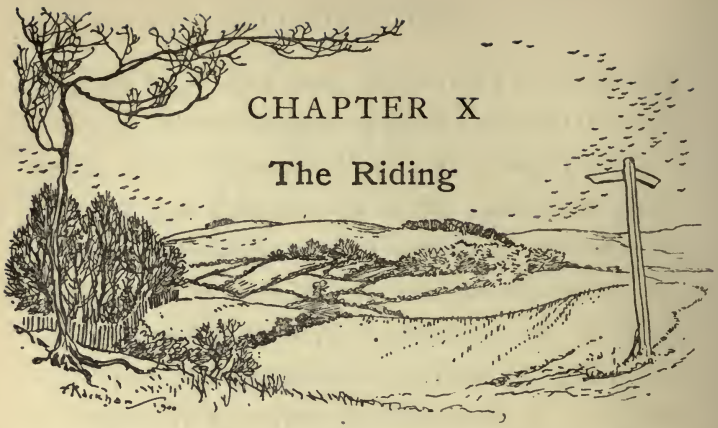
I am not a believer in the ordinary show, but I think the shows and premiums for thoroughbred stallions are likely to do great good in improving the breed of hunters. Formerly we had to be content with a stallion if he was not thought good enough to be a sire of racehorses, but now there is every encouragement to keep a horse that is sound, has plenty of bone, and is built somewhat on hunter lines.

The man who attempts to breed hunters may expect many failures and few successes. The reason for this is that the two animals mated are not of one type, and the hope is to graft quality on to strength, but the usual result is a combination of the worst points of both. It is a well-known rule in breeding, that the greater the difference in outward appearance between male and female, the more will their progeny vary in shapes and sizes. Crossing is and always will be a risky game to play, but that is at present our only way of breeding a hunter.

The thoroughbred horse on the half-bred mare is the usual plan, but I prefer the other way about. Size and strength with the sire, quality and staying-power with the dam. Some of the

best hunters I have ever seen have been by half-bred stallions out of thoroughbred mares.

In a country that is chiefly arable, and where there are many banks to scramble up, a horse that is only three-parts thoroughbred is perhaps the most comfortable mount, but for Leicestershire I should always prefer one clean bred, providing he had the substance to carry my weight. A thoroughbred horse up to weight is very difficult to find, and when found it usually requires a well-filled purse to buy. Lord Lonsdale when hunting the Quorn rode a splendid class of horse, and I believe nearly everything in his stable had a birthright in the stud-book. I would not, however, advise a beginner or a moderate rider to buy that class, even if his means would allow him to do it. A thoroughbred horse has generally very high-strung nerves, and the excitement of hunting may lead him to do something rash, unless there is a good man in the saddle. The bad rider will find that the cock-tail will get him into fewer difficulties, and will be safer, if not quite so brilliant as the other.



CHAPTER X

The Riding

THERE is no better place than the hunting-field to learn the art of horsemanship, yet in a crowd of three hundred at the covert-side you can generally count on the fingers of one hand those that are really first-class. One excels in hands, and another in his seat, whilst a third has the power of making his horse do exactly what is required of him, but the man who combines everything is very rare. The majority of men do not acquire the art until late in life, when loss of nerve renders them unable to enjoy the benefits of their knowledge.

Good nerve is the most essential requisite in riding to hounds. Therefore, if you wish to enjoy yourself, take every possible precaution to preserve your nerve, and do not imagine

because it is strong at the commencement of life, that it will not fail under the strain of irregular habits. Be moderate in eating, drinking, and smoking. Avoid strong tea and coffee, go to bed early, and remember that a failing nerve may be always traced to the stomach. Want of nerve and funk are not the same thing, yet the nervous man is in a manner afraid. I do not believe the absolute coward exists any more than the man who cannot feel fear. We shall all have to face death some day, and I do not think any of us fear that moment; but it is the manner of death that makes us afraid. The soldier who has led a forlorn hope with a smile on his face, might be afraid if asked to do what a chimney-jack does every day; yet I do not suppose that death from a fall of a hundred and fifty feet would be any more painful than being riddled with bullets. The man who has the character of not knowing what fear is, will perhaps cower under an operation that a delicate woman would bear without a murmur. We are not all built of the same material, and the thing that frightens one man will have no effect on

another; but I think every one fears something, though when the nerves are strong it is always possible to overpower that fear.

More accidents in the hunting-field happen through bad nerves than anything else, and the good horseman who has lost his nerve is more likely to fall than the indifferent one. He has always assisted his horse with hands and legs at a fence, but when his nerve goes he does it the fraction of a second too soon or too late, with disastrous results to himself. The man, however, who has always left everything entirely to his horse, rides still in the same style, and, not attempting to interfere at the fence, is much less likely to come to grief.

I would advise the beginner to leave his horse entirely alone at the fences. The art of assisting a horse to jump is a natural gift bestowed on only a few men, but it must be carefully cultivated by long practice and experience to be a success.

In Ireland the snaffle alone is generally seen on a hunter, but in England nearly every one uses the curb, and the majority of horses are over-bitted. In the hands of a perfect

horseman the heavy double-reined bridle can do no harm, because he will not apply it at the wrong moment, but with an indifferent rider it is an instrument of torture to the animal and a source of danger to the man himself. There are probably more perfect hunters to be seen in Leicestershire than in any other country, and yet, if half a dozen horses jump a fence, one of them is certain to break it down. If you watch, you can easily see the reason for yourself. The good rider sails over without disturbing a twig, and then comes a nervous man or one who is a moderate horseman. He involuntarily clutches the reins as the horse is spreading himself to land, the curb tightens, the neck is bent, and the hind legs crash through the fence in consequence. If every one used snaffles, or shorter cheeked bits, there would be fewer falls, and the farmers would not have to complain of broken hedges. The beginner should remember this and avoid over-bridling. All he requires is a bridle with which he can control his horse, but even then he must not make use of the reins to regulate his balance in the saddle. If he should feel at all insecure, it is far better to

clutch the pommel for safety than to make the horse's mouth bear the weight of his body. When the beginner has learned to sit over a fence without moving in the saddle or holding on by the reins he may then use a double-rein bridle, but it should only have a short cheek to start with. I have said that it would be better if every one used snaffles, but no one can become a perfect horseman who rides entirely with that bridle, and I advise only those with bad hands to use it altogether. There are many degrees in 'hands' between the very bad and the very good. Though the latter are only given to the few, I consider the former ought not to exist at all if the rider is careful not to get into bad habits at the start. The gifted few are born with a sensitive touch in their fingers, and when this is properly educated the slightest pressure will convey the rider's meaning to the horse. My father's advice to me as a boy was to imagine the reins were silken threads which any sharp pull would break.

I have known many first-class men across-country with the very worst of hands, but though they may get safely over fences and occupy a

foremost position with hounds, they miss half the pleasure of riding, and their horses are always uncomfortable. These must be men of undaunted nerve, and they will generally get more than their share of crushing falls, whilst the state of their horses' mouths—dry, set, and perhaps bloody—will show what the poor animals have endured.

Don't get the idea into your head that your horse is to be stopped by physical strength, but always keep a gentle feel on the reins and encourage him to play with the bit. Keep your hands down low and your elbows in. The more you pull at a horse, the more he will pull at you.

Because a man is a nice horseman, it does not follow that he will be a good rider to hounds; but he will have a distinct advantage over the duffer on a horse, and those who desire to hunt should learn to ride. An exhaustive treatise on horsemanship would require a volume to itself, and my intention is to give here only a few hints, which I hope may prove of use to the beginner on his entry to the hunting-field.

The ambition of a young man who is really

keen should be, not to jump a bigger fence than some one else, but always to be in the same field with hounds. Experience only will teach him the shortest way to get there; but if he is ever on the alert and never funks a fence, he will generally find himself in the right place. You will never learn to ride over a country if you always follow a pilot. Choose your place in a fence, ride your own line, and keep your eye on the hounds. In the beginning this may bring you to grief occasionally, but a few falls should only serve to make a youngster keener, and hard knocks will teach you more than books.

At the covert-side, when hounds are drawing, you must keep all your faculties awake, and never allow yourself to be drawn into a conversation. Many a run has been lost through coffee-housing and not attending to what is going on. Directly the fox is halloaed away, get there as quick as you can, and be ready to start with hounds. I do not mean that you are to gallop off directly one hound is out of covert, but be on the spot ready to set off. A good start is all-important, and when once you get in the front rank you will find it comparatively easy to keep there.

You must not ride directly behind hounds, but be on either flank, and not too wide ; then, if you always have your eye on the leading hound, you will be able to pull up in time if the fox has turned short. Experience will soon teach you to distinguish when a hound has the scent and when it is only drive that is taking him forward. Nothing upsets a pack more than riding close behind them; it is not only that you may press them yards beyond the scent at a turn, but the mere fact of horses galloping in their wake seems to distract their attention from the business of hunting.

When hounds come to a check, pull up at once, and don't walk on because you see them feeling for the line, but above all never talk. There should be dead silence at a check, but I am sorry to say it is generally the moment chosen for a buzz of conversation.

I am not one of those who think that women are in the way out hunting, and in my experience I have always considered they do much less harm than the men, but the time when they do sin is at a check. They not only then talk themselves, but they encourage men to talk as well, and I

have repeatedly seen a woman lead a whole field over ground where the pack intended to cast themselves. The woman, instead of attending to what hounds are doing, enters into a conversation with a man, and together they walk on without paying heed to the damage they may do. My dear sisters, please forgive me calling you to order, but if you would only keep silent when hounds are at fault, and stand quite still, you might perhaps shame your admirers into better behaviour, and thereby be the means of furthering the interests of sport.

There are certain rules of the hunting-field which it is incumbent on you to observe, not only for your own safety, but also for the welfare of the general community. The most important of these is to ride at a direct right angle to the fence you intend to jump. If you espy an easier place either to the right or left, you must look behind first to see if you will cross any one else by taking advantage of it. You should be at least two hundred yards ahead of a man when you cross him, but it is difficult to state an exact distance, as much depends on the pace he is going. If, however, there is room for you to

cut in without the man having to check the speed of his horse, you are quite safe; but remember, when you diverge either to the right or left, you are taking another's place, and it is your duty to see that you do not thus impede his progress. Unless the place directly in front of you is exceptionally strong, your horse will jump it with less effort to himself than by checking him in his stride to find a weaker spot. You must, however, be sufficiently wide of the man to stop your horse if the animal shows any intention of swerving to the thin place in the hedge, but it is always safer to give plenty of room. Of course, if you follow a man, you must always consider the possibility of his falling, and leave sufficient space accordingly. Women have the credit of being careless in this respect, but during many years' experience in the field I have never seen any one jumped on by a woman, though I have frequently observed men committing that offence. However, it does not much matter to the man jumped on who does it, and all he asks is that those who follow him should exercise ordinary care.

There has been a great deal of discussion about the proper pace to ride at fences, and some of the

leading authorities appear to hold diverse opinions. The description of fence at which you are riding must, of course, influence you to a certain extent; but my idea is, that the proper pace to ride at every species of obstacle is a hand-canter. In the case of a very wide ditch or brook, you may put the pace on in the last thirty or forty yards, but however big a strip of water it may be, your horse should always be collected, going within himself and not spread out. When I speak of a hand-canter, I mean that a horse is going with his neck slightly bent and his hind legs well under him. At this gait, by making only the very slightest effort, he can bound over a fence like an indiarubber ball, and yet if some unforeseen difficulty presents itself at the last moment, he can easily change his legs or put in an extra stride. A horse cannot jump properly when galloping, and he must either pull up to jump virtually at a stand, or shuffle over the fence with the impetus of the gallop. Of course, I know there is not always time to jump in the proper style, and when the obstacle is not formidable you can afford to gallop over it, but in hunting you never know exactly what to expect, and it

is the unexpected which generally brings you to grief. In steeplechasing, both you and your horse know exactly what to expect, but there are few good riders who go full speed at their fences, even between the flags, unless, perhaps, it is the last fence. If there was such a thing as a five-furlong steeplechase with half a dozen fences of fair strength, few horses would complete the course; but the ordinary steeplechase being always over two miles, no horse is extended at full speed until the finish.

You may look on a horse as a steel spring from his nose to his hind feet. When extended to his highest speed, the steel straightens out at every stride to its full length, and at that moment—when hind feet and nose are the farthest apart—he is quite unprepared to negotiate an unlooked-for contingency. Bend the steel, and you get a power and reserve of force which will be ready at any moment to shoot you over the highest hedge. By bending the steel, I mean making the horse arch his neck, which at the same time obliges him to bring his hind legs beneath him. Therefore in jumping you may make the horse bend his neck, but as he

raises himself on his hind legs in the act of springing from the ground, you should let his head go, as, unless he can stretch his neck fully out, he cannot exert the whole power of his hind quarters. The exact moment of doing this is known only to a horseman with good hands and considerable experience. These are niceties in the art of equitation which the beginner cannot expect to understand, but that is no reason he should not try to acquire them in time.

The best pace to ride at a fence, I think, led me into this discussion, and, as I have said, I consider the canter gives a horse the opportunity of putting forth his greatest strength with least exertion to himself. If you want to make up ground, gallop as fast as you like over the open, but always try and steady your horse at a fence. When you see a rider sticking the spurs in and hurrying on in the last fifty yards, you will notice his horse is almost certain to jump the fence badly. There is much to be learned about riding to hounds, and there are some men who never seem to get any better; but if the beginner is careful not to get into bad habits at the start, he ought soon to improve with practice. Those



Yours very truly
Lonsdale

get a view of the fox as he goes away, and your keenness will be stimulated, so that the run will give you much greater pleasure. The way to extract the most enjoyment out of a run is to forget all about the riding, and imagine yourself in the huntsman's place with his desire to catch the fox. I do not mean you are to interfere—that is an unpardonable sin—but you can interest yourself and think what you would do if you were carrying the horn. By thinking only of the hunting, you will get much greater pleasure from the riding, and the successful negotiation of a fence in the wake of hounds is a most delightful feeling. However fond a man may be of the sport, he always looks on jumping as an additional pleasure, and when I hear any one say otherwise, I suspect his nerve to be shaky.

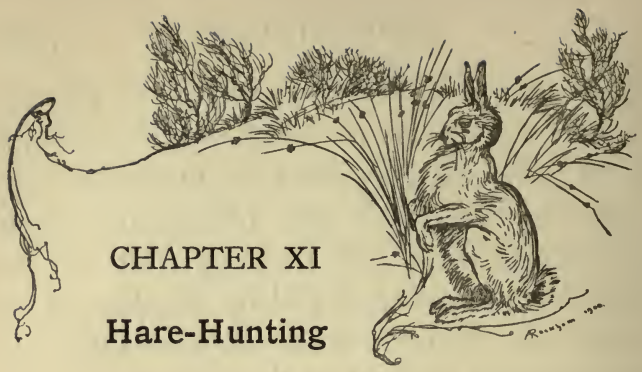
It must not be forgotten that fear lends a pleasurable excitement, and I am not certain that some people do not enjoy the feeling of funk which the fence inspires.

If your nerve is not of the strongest, a long wait at the covert-side in a cold wind will possibly increase your dread of the first fence, and if you

allow yourself to shirk it, you will never go near another all day. In an instance of this sort, you must make up your mind to jump that first fence, however much your nerves may object, and you must pick out your own place, not the gap that every one is making for, but a fair-sized jump. Once you are over the initial leap, happiness for the rest of the day will be your reward.

Always be careful not to cut off—get between —hounds and the rest of the pack, or when they are going to the huntsman. When hounds swing towards you at a check as if they thought the line was beneath you, turn your horse's head round and move back, or you will stop them in making their full swing.

These little hints may, I hope, prove useful; but the beginner, if he keeps his eyes open, will soon learn for himself. In conclusion, I may add that it is always wise to get over a fence without a fall, but it is much better to get over with a fall than remain on the wrong side.



CHAPTER XI

Hare-Hunting

'A diff'rent hound for every diff'rent chase
Select with judgment; nor the timorous hare
O'ermatched destroy, but leave that vile offence
To the mean, murd'ring, coursing crew, intent
On blood and spoil. O blast their hopes, just Heaven!'

SOMERVILLE.

THE chase of the hare is an honourable and ancient sport—in fact, I believe that animal was the first hunted by scent. Xenophon wrote on the subject, and there have been many treatises written since his day. When fox-hunting came into fashion, its exciting joys soon threw into the shade the more sober sport, and since then men have been wont to look down on the hare-hunter.

If you want to see hunting, to see every turn puzzled out, and to see the hounds' scenting-powers tried to their utmost, then go and have a day with harriers or beagles. The hare when

not bustled out of her senses with too fast a hound will perform the most astonishing feats to save her life, and no one can predict what her next move will be.

In a country that is hunted by foxhounds a pack of harriers is out of place, as any one riding can have much better sport after a fox, and the farmer gets his land cut up quite enough with the legitimate hunt. A field of twenty with harriers will do more damage to fences and crops in one day on a farm than the foxhounds would in a whole season. When a hare does make a good point, which is not often, she generally runs several rings round her home before eventually going away. I have heard it said that following harriers is a splendid opportunity for schooling a young horse, and I have no doubt it is an excellent plan; but unless the land belongs to or is occupied by the owner of the horse, it seems to me a very cool proceeding. The master should keep his eye on these people, and make them compensate the farmer handsomely for broken fences.

There are a great many different ways of hunting the hare, but with all respect for the

opinions of others, I do not call it hunting to run her to death with twenty-two inch foxhounds. If you ride you must, of course, use a hound of a certain size—say not less than sixteen inches—but you ought to leave the pack almost entirely alone. The greatest charm of this sport is to watch the hound working, and if you are continually interfering you will fail to see not only many a clever ruse of the hare to escape, but also the qualities of the different hounds in making equally clever hits. Those who look on harriers merely as an excuse for a gallop, can have no liking for the sport itself, and should follow foxhounds instead.

The way I distinguish between the two sports is this: in fox-hunting the riding is an inseparable part of the whole amusement, and in hare-hunting it should be considered only as a means to enable a man to watch proceedings. There are people who are unfortunate enough to live in a country where no fox-hunting can be procured, and they may be forgiven for trying to simulate the joys of the greater sport by a base imitation, but the result is neither one thing nor the other, and they had much better content themselves with the sober delights of a legitimate hare-hunt.

In all hunting there should be slight odds in favour of the animal pursued—that is taking an average of the season and not any particular good or bad scenting-day. I should put the odds at three to one on the fox in an ordinary country with a good pack of hounds and a fair huntsman. This is a standard which I should like to see hare-hunters carry in their minds when they are making preparations for the pursuit of puss. A fox-hunter having the odds against him feels he has a right to take every advantage he can of the fox within certain bounds, but beyond these he will not pass if he is a good sportsman at heart.

With a smart pack of harriers of twenty inches that have nose as well as pace, I should put the odds at five to one against the hare. To balance things more evenly, you should not give hounds a view at the start, hardly any assistance at a check, and never lift them to a halloa.

You will have gathered from the foregoing remarks that hunting the hare with harriers bred from foxhounds is not a sport which I admire, and you will therefore forgive me not dwelling long on the subject. My argument is that if twelve-inch beagles can kill a hare in reasonable

time, it is manifestly unfair to pursue her with a hound nearly twice the size. A good pack of harriers over eighteen inches, that have been carefully bred, ought never to miss killing their brace of hares every day they go out, but they must not string, and the proverbial sheet should always cover them. A scratch pack that have been collected from the rubbish of other kennels may occasionally chop a hare, but they will very seldom hunt her to death.

When it is almost a certainty that hounds will have one kill or more each day they hunt, it is impossible to feel that keenness for blood which is the spirit of hunting. No one who is really fond of hounds will rest content until he has his pack almost perfect, and I say that a perfect pack of harriers should kill every hare they find, so that a man after years of trouble and labour in breeding to a certain perfection, sees all his toil wasted in trying to accomplish an end which brings no satisfaction when attained.

Where there are no foxhounds hunting a certain district, there is always an opening for a pack of harriers, but nothing should be done until the landowners and the farmers have been

consulted. The would-be master must remember that hunting is practically a public amusement, and in starting a new pack he has not to consider his own wishes, but those of the people living in the neighbourhood. If it is a district that has never been hunted before, he will meet with many difficulties to start with, and considerable opposition, but courtesy and tact should smooth this all away. He should persuade as many people as possible to come out and join his hunt, not sneak off for his own selfish amusement without letting any one know. On introducing hounds to a country that has never been hunted, the first thing a master has to do is to make himself popular and to get the inhabitants to take an interest in the sport. This done, and the harriers will soon become a recognised institution, deserving of every one's support.

Now we come to the consideration of the best type of hound to use, and here I hesitate to give advice. If you want a smart twenty minutes' gallop, you cannot do better than buy draft foxhounds, or you can get practically the same animal from some h[illegible]ennels, but as this

does not appear to me to be sport, I would rather not advise you any further.

In a moorland country where there is either high bracken or heather, I consider the old English harrier the most suitable hound to hunt the hare. Though their height is often over twenty-four inches, they are really not much faster than fifteen-inch beagles, but they can lumber along through the heather all day, whereas a small hound would soon get tired. Then they have a splendid deep note which can be heard a long distance—a very necessary qualification in a rough country where hounds are frequently out of sight. I am very sorry that there are not more packs of these hounds, and that there are signs of the few dying out, as I consider they are exactly the right stamp of large hound to hunt hares. They have no drive, have excellent scenting-powers, and will go on hunting all day.

I think perhaps the fault of getting harriers too fast very often arises from having too good horses in the first instance. If the master and huntsman were obliged to ride fourteen-hand cobs, that could jump well and only gallop

moderately, they would soon be glad to reduce the standard of the pack. When a man has a beautiful blood horse, good enough to ride with the Quorn, he will always be wanting his harriers to go faster.

When a man aims at breeding a pack of hounds that will please the eye and also be satisfactory in their work, he will breed to the foxhound type, which is perfection of symmetry in a dog. The big, slow hound will show you very good sport, and perhaps give better results with hares than the quicker and smaller harrier, but you will never be pleased with him on the flags, if you have first learned to love the shape of the foxhound. These are the two sorts of hounds that you may use in hunting the hare.

My ideal of a harrier is a hound of about seventeen inches, and I would never have it exceed eighteen. If you are careful in the breeding and never keep a hound with a fault, a hare will not often escape you. When, however, you first commence, you will probably have to start with larger hounds, but the end you should always have in view is the reduction of your standard to as near seventeen inches as you

can get it. Sixteen inches is, I consider, the smallest hound that it is advisable to ride to, as below that size they will have a continual fear of horses, which will interfere with their hunting.

When your pack has become perfect, you may leave them almost entirely alone, and should never try to cut off corners or lift them, unless it happens to be a very bad scenting-day. You must remember, if there is any scent at all, a harrier can always keep pace with the hare, and the less they are lifted the better they will hunt. If hounds are never allowed to puzzle out a line for themselves, they will get into the habit of looking for assistance always, and will fail you at a critical moment.

The best plan in starting a new pack is to buy drafts from well-known kennels that are parted with on account of size, and not from any particular defect, but no one ever parts with really good entered hounds unless they have some fault. Of course, if you have the opportunity of buying a whole pack, you may consider yourself very lucky, but these chances seldom occur at the moment they are wanted. In your first few seasons you must put up with bad legs and feet,

if their owners have good noses to recommend them. The first essential in a harrier is nose, and you can forgive him being ugly if only he is good in his work. It is a safe rule never to buy a good-looking entered hound, for you may be certain he would not be sold if he was also reliable in his work.

The annual show at Peterborough has done much to improve the harrier's appearance, and it has brought the masters of different packs in touch with one another, so that they are able to benefit by an interchange of blood. The old hand is not likely to make the mistake of sacrificing working qualities for looks, but there is always a danger of beginners, in a laudable endeavour to secure the coveted honours on the flags, forgetting the real purpose for which they breed hounds. The foxhound show is always held on the previous day, and is attended by the majority of harrier men, who look on with envy at the perfection of form that makes them dissatisfied with their own packs and desirous of emulating it; but they should remember that though working qualities have always held first place, the outward appearance of the foxhound

has taken many years to bring up to its present high standard. The harrier's looks were no doubt neglected, and we cannot now hope to build up a perfect animal in a day. Do not let us lose a fraction of that strong sense of smell in a hurried attempt to improve his appearance.

Besides the old English harrier I have already mentioned, there are still packs in different parts of the country that retain the characteristics of the ancient blood from which they are descended. Scattered about in various localities the Welsh harrier still exists, and is very nearly related to the foxhound of that country. Devonshire also claims a breed of her own, and in the southern counties are harriers that are undoubtedly descendants of what was called the southern hound. Then amongst the Cumberland folk there remain a few of the breed which were peculiar to the north. At the time when fox-hunting suddenly came into fashion, there was probably in the midlands a mixture of these different sorts, but the increasing popularity of the new sport drove the hare-hunter into out-of-the-way corners of England, where they still may be found.

I must confess that I am too much of a fox-

hunter myself to like seeing hounds potter along on a scent and hunt out the line inch by inch, but when I have passed my three-score years I think it might be pleasant to watch such a hunt from the back of a fat cob. It seems a pity to allow the hound and his particular mode of hunting to die out, as it suits the infirmities of old age. After sixty-five we can see little of a fast pack, whether they be harriers or foxhounds, and the old-fashioned harrier would then satisfy our wants. However, I am forgetting that it is the young man to whom I am talking, and he will like something rather quicker. By all means, then, get a pack of the foxhound type—good legs and feet, sloping shoulders and muscular quarters. If you are a good sportsman you will not get them too big, and will remember Somerville's lines at the head of this chapter—

> . . . nor the timorous hare
> O'ermatched destroy. . . .

At the beginning of the season, or when you are first starting your pack, I advise you to go out as soon as it is light and try to trail up to a hare. You ought to know beforehand where the hares feed, or you will waste time,

which is all-important in the autumn when a few hours' sun will dissipate every trace of scent. It is a capital education for young hounds, hunting a trail, and it helps to steady the old ones at the commencement of the season. Blood is quite as necessary with harriers as foxhounds, and you should make certain of killing or try your best for the first few days of the season, and after that your hounds will do it all themselves.

I think with harriers it is better, when a hare is lying in the open, to put her away, and then lay them quietly on when she is out of sight; but though I consider this plan gives the best results, I like hounds to find the game themselves. Of course, if you have any covert where there are hares, you can let them draw it, but mind they don't get a taste for rabbit.

Unless you are very much in want of blood, never give your hounds a view until the hare is about done. Avoid riding close to them, and endeavour to keep your field back; you will then find that, however much foxhound blood they possess, they will cast themselves back when they discover the hare is not forward. If you are a good sportsman and really care about hare-hunt-

ing, you will not give it up at the first difficulty that presents itself and draw again. With big hounds and a country plentifully stocked with hares, you need never trouble yourself whether it is a fresh hare or the run one you are pursuing, as you know your pack can always beat her unless she cheats them with some cunning double. You ought, however, never to give up your run hare, and the more difficult the problem she sets you the more anxious you should be to solve it. This, to my mind, is the chief pleasure in the sport, or otherwise you might get a brace of greyhounds to run for you.

One of the favourite dodges a hare has of throwing her pursuers off the track is to run a road, and I have known them to do this for two miles without once leaving the dusty surface. If you are not fortunate enough to have a good road-hound, your only plan is to keep holding the pack forward, first on one side and then on the other, but a still better way is to get some hounds on each side of the road. A hare that has been bustled and is getting wide of the smeuses she knows may do anything, and it is never safe to predict what she will do next.

There is another method of hunting the hare, and that is with foot-beagles. The harrier and the beagle have been crossed so often that it is almost impossible to point out the individual characteristics of each breed. The harrier I define as a hare-hound to be followed on horse-back, and the beagle on foot. This is the only difference; but you will understand that the hound which suits one sport will not suit another.

I do not wish to dogmatise or lay down the law, but in my opinion the only sporting way of hunting the hare is to follow her on foot—that is, in a moderately level country and with a fair amount of grass. Then with a pack of hounds not exceeding fourteen inches, the odds are about the same as in fox-hunting—three to one on the hare.

Beagling is becoming more popular every day, and there are now several well-recognised packs that hunt regularly, showing capital sport and affording an immense amount of pleasure to a class of men who cannot afford to ride. For a professional or business man fox-hunting is generally out of the question—it takes up too much time, and keeping only one hunter is



Foot Beagles.

FROM A PHOTO BY ELLIOTT & FRY.

expensive ; but most men can get off for a few hours once or twice a week for a run with beagles. It is splendid exercise, and there is no finer phase of hunting.

The best size of hound to use is a question over which there has been much discussion, but it may safely be laid down as a rule that foot-beagles cannot be too small, provided they can catch their hare, say on an average at every third attempt. Those who follow hounds naturally want to see as much of them as possible, and no man on foot, however good a runner he may be, can keep near fifteen-inch beagles when there is a good scent. More than half the pleasure of beagling is being able to run with the pack, and though you may not kill quite as many hares with small hounds, you have the enjoyment of seeing all the hunting, and when you do kill your satisfaction is complete.

The description of country over which you hunt must of course be considered, and where there is much plough, or where there are many deep dykes, you will require a rather larger hound. When first starting a pack, you may be obliged to put up with what you can get,

and a sixteen-inch beagle is much easier to find than the smaller sort, but as they become more perfect you should gradually be able to reduce your standard. It is well to bear in mind the old fable of the race between the hare and the tortoise. A pack that go very fast up to the moment when the hare first turns, and then have a long check, lose more time than the little fellows who hardly ever falter. The latter I compare to the tortoise, and they will generally win the race. The more perfect your pack is, the smaller may be your standard.

By a perfect pack I mean that there is neither head nor tail, that every hound has a first-rate nose, and not one has a fault in his work. Then they must be built on the right lines—good backs and loins, a middle-piece that allows free play for heart and lungs, with a barrel that is a guarantee of a strong constitution. Strength without lumber and quality without lightness should be your motto. Shoulders you must have, and any that are deficient in that respect you had better weed out at once. The bad-shouldered may keep up for the first half-hour, but with a good scent they will gradually drop behind after

that, and every season they will get worse. A first-rate pack of beagles may perhaps be running at the top of their speed for a full hour, which is not only a tremendous trial of their condition and powers of endurance, but is also a great strain on their shoulders and other parts of the frame. The shoulders should be sloping and the bodies should have a perfectly even balance. Any defect in the formation of a hound's structure will entirely alter his gait and will nearly double the exertion of every movement. The evenly balanced hound glides over the ground as smoothly as a swallow skims the air, and with as little trouble to himself.

Condition is of course the most important thing with small beagles, and does not always get the attention it deserves from young masters. I must refer you to what I have already written on the subject in the chapter dealing with the foxhound, and remind you that if you wish your beagles to run well, they must be fit. When you see a hare get up in front of a small pack of beagles and leave them behind at every stride, the idea of them catching her seems absurd. The only chance they have of succeeding is by

being in such hard condition that they wear the hare down, and by having such good noses that they practically never stop. A slow hound that is always on the line gives a hare very little time to get her wind, and if you can only keep her going, you will soon tire her out.

The bicycle will be found an excellent means of exercising hounds and getting them fit, but you neve ought to take them fast when the roads are dusty, and at all times six miles an hour is quite fast enough. Have them out as often and as long as you can in the summer. If you can manage it, a twenty-five mile walk once a week is a splendid thing for the hounds, and will harden their feet.

If you intend hunting the beagles yourself, you must not neglect your own condition, and a five-mile run once or twice a week during the summer will make running in the winter a pleasure instead of a weary toil. Unless the huntsman is an extraordinary runner, he should never spurt or try to compete with his field, and always manage to have something in reserve, so that he can take hounds quickly to a halloa or lift them to view a beaten hare. This is the

time of day that a huntsman to beagles should be ready to exert himself, and unless he is a good stayer, it is then he will be found wanting. Whilst the pack are fresh at the beginning of the day they may be left practically to themselves, and in fact that is the best plan for several reasons; but at the end of a hard and tiring run, after there have been perhaps half a dozen changes and after four hours' continuous running, the hare gets tired and there seems a chance of a kill. The huntsman must then be ready to take advantage of every opportunity he sees of getting nearer to his hare, and must press his hounds on. A kill at the end of a really hard day is of great benefit to hounds, and the reverse when you fail. You may be tired out, leg-weary and hungry, but you must persevere, and your reward will come the next time you hunt. To do these things you must be in good condition, full of hard muscle and in fair wind.

Having made the pack and yourself fit, you will begin to think of a hunt, and when the corn is all cut the desire will become strong. With small hounds it is advisable to begin early whilst

the hares are weak, and you can thus get the pack well blooded before your regular season commences. Everything, however, must depend on the wishes of the people over whose land you hunt, and if they do not object you can have your first morning at the end of September. There is no reason you should not begin a month earlier if the landowners and occupiers are willing, but when once you commence you must go on hunting at least one day a week.

In some countries and with some packs it is the rule to begin the regular season on the first of October, but we do not commence until November. Whatever date you fix on for making a start, you ought to have at least a fortnight or three weeks' rehearsal to get your hounds under proper command. I am not referring to the man who hunts only on his own land and for his own amusement—he can please himself; but the man who has to depend on others for the hare he finds and the ground he runs over, is to a certain extent a public servant. He should fix the date for opening the season, the days he intends hunting, and the hour for meeting, which should be that most convenient to the majority of his

supporters. The preliminary days the master has only to consider himself and his hounds, without a thought as to the pleasure of his field. The first two or three mornings he goes out, let him start as soon as it is light, and hunt the hare to her form by her previous night's wanderings. There should be no halloaing, and he should have two attentive whips to administer punishment when required. When he has killed a hare, let him return to kennel at once.

The whole future season depends on the manner in which these preliminary days are conducted: when the pack have been well blooded, have gained confidence in themselves and their huntsman, are free from riot and are under proper control, then you may look forward to a time when you will enjoy the fruits of your labours.

Although I do not think a hound often finds a hare unless it is in the morning, I believe in letting them try, and they should always be made to draw for themselves. They then depend more on their own powers, and are not always staring about for a halloa. Try what you think the most likely part of the field with the pack, and let the beaters work the uncertain portions. Beaters sometimes go on

in front of hounds to put a hare up, but you should not allow this, and if you think one has been drawn over they can walk behind you. No one should be before hounds at any time. Hounds that always have their hare found for them get very slack and are of little use in a run when she lies down. Encourage them to draw in front of you, and do not rate a hound because he feathers on some scent which you *think* is not a hare. Remember he commits no fault unless he actually opens on a line which you have proof yourself is not that of a hare. Sometimes at the beginning of the season, or when your pack is rather wild, it is advisable for some one to put the hare away, and you can lay them on when she is out of sight. This must be done very quietly without any halloaing, and if it looks a fair scenting-day you may give the hare two minutes' start, when you can walk quietly up to the spot where the finder is holding up his cap, and encourage them to put their heads down.

Experience only will teach you the most likely places to find a hare, and then if you go into another country all your preconceived ideas will be at fault. It is the nature of the hare to pro-

tect herself from the wind as much as possible, and she generally chooses a sheltered spot; but this is not an invariable rule, and you will sometimes find her lying in the most exposed places. There are certain parts of certain fields in which a hare may generally be found from whatever quarter the wind blows, but these, I think, are generally does or leverets—the old jack takes care to lie in a snug place where he is least likely to be disturbed. Ground that has been manured or newly ploughed it is waste of time drawing. They are very fond of young plantations with plenty of grass in them, but they seldom lie in thick coverts. When there has been no rain or dew for several days, the hedgerows are likely places, but they will not lie where the drip from tree or thorn falls on them.

Hunting a hare with small foot-beagles may be carried on in the same style as a foxhunt, and, to my mind, the two sports closely resemble each other. You must allow no dwelling on the line, for though the hare, unlike the fox, may wait for you, she will be resting herself and gaining fresh strength every moment you allow her to lie down. Always let your hounds make their own cast

before you think of assisting them, and consider in your mind the reason for their checking. Do not be afraid of casting forward, as if she has gone on you save time, and if she has turned back she will probably be lying down. With a good pack you will have very little to do unless there is a very bad scent, but if they are out of blood you will find they will run well and hunt well, until the hare is getting beat and her scent is failing. At that critical moment they will dwell and potter on the line, never making any headway and getting slacker every minute. This is the time when your ability as a huntsman is put to the test, and you must do all in your power to get them forward. Your eye must be everywhere at once, so that you observe each hound's movements, every moving object in the surrounding country, and are ever on the alert to view the beaten hare.

The most frequent cause of failure in the pursuit of a hare is changing. Just when the one you are hunting is getting tired, up jumps another fresh from her form, and away go the pack in full view. There is very little hope of stopping them, and when you do succeed the chances are you will

not be able to recover your original quarry, either that the lapse of time has allowed the scent to disappear or puss stole away when her enemies' backs were turned. It is a very common occurrence for a hunted hare to squat alongside of another, and, of course, the fresh one is certain to get up first. There is not the slightest doubt this is done intentionally, and, I believe, it is a regular custom—an instinct bred by experience—to defeat the dog species—at least the fresh hare always appears to take up her burden cheerfully, as if it were merely the performance of an ordinary duty. When a hare has run for about a mile and still finds she is pursued, she generally visits every field and form in which some of her friends reside, so that there will soon be two or three afoot where you thought they were very scarce. Your best chance of success, both in killing and having a good run, is to force her out of her country, and then she will probably go quite straight. Hares will run straight sometimes even when they have not lost themselves, but this sort is like the travelling fox—hard to find.

On strictly preserved estates the hare is a semi-tame animal, affording sport neither to the gun

nor the hound; but the wild hare that lives in a grazing district of small holdings, where every farmer keeps a sheep-dog and where 'velveteens' is unknown, is a quarry worthy of being hunted. The sheep-dog will speedily snap up the weak, and none but the strong will survive. In this way you hunt an animal that is really wild, and you also find it in excellent condition.

There is no sport in shooting a hare—or I might say more than one—and no skill is required, so that it is always a wonder to me why they should be preserved in such large numbers on several estates. Where there are a brace at least in every field, it is a farce trying to hunt them with foot-beagles, and you will very seldom get a run. If you can get the consent of the occupiers to hunt over a country where there are no hares at all, you can very soon stock it sufficiently well for your purpose. Buy your hares in the spring, and ask the farmers when you turn them down not to shoot them in the summer, then by the following winter there will be plenty to hunt. You ought always to make it a rule when you kill to send a hare to the farmer on whose land you find.

If foot-beagles kill a hare I think they deserve to have it, and dead ones are not very expensive to buy. Harriers kill much oftener, and the entrails may be sufficient to satisfy their appetite for blood. Many people think it is unnecessary to give hounds the body, but I am quite certain it makes them work better, and that they are all the keener for it.

I have said that in most instances it is advisable to make a forward cast, but I do not wish to infer that the hare generally goes on. It is her usual custom to turn short one way or the other, run her foil and try various dodges to evade hounds; but by casting forward you will hit her line where she has gone on again, and the cry of beagles behind is nearly certain to make her complete the double. Unless you are running directly behind the pack they will be quite ready at a check to try back, and you will get a pretty good hint from them of what the hare has done.

When a hare that is being hunted runs either a road or a path, she will, in nine cases out of ten, turn back and run her foil before she makes off sideways. If you see a trustworthy old hound running back on the line he has come, do not

chide him for hunting the heelway until you are satisfied he is wrong.

In making a cast the huntsman should regulate his pace according to the quality of the scent, but he should never go so fast that the hounds cannot have their heads down. By hurrying them on and a whip cracking behind them, they are quite likely to cross the line without discovering it. The huntsman should make his cast with his pack trying in front of him, and not dragging on at his heels.

If you happen to have a pack which, through mismanagement and other causes, have become very wild, your only plan is to make them hunt. Never give them a view, allow no halloaing, and do not assist them at a check until they are quite at a loss. If there is every appearance of being a good scent, give the hare some law and let them hunt up to her. In fact, wild or unsteady hounds should be made to hunt out the coldest scent over plough and grass alike as long as they can own a line. Keep them at it all day, and do not bother about a kill on the first occasion—you will be able to accomplish that the next time you take them out, when they will be nearly cured of unsteadiness.

It is a very difficult matter to distinguish a run hare in dry weather—the only sign then is a thin look, and when very tired, an arched back. You must not forget that a good hare will make a last effort when quite beat, and will spurt for two hundred yards as fast as when she started, though at the end of that distance she may not be able to move. The young huntsman therefore need not always despair, because the hare he had thought tired leaves his pack at every stride, after jumping up at their feet.

Never give up a tired hare whilst daylight lasts. In going to a halloa, always find out the exact spot where she was last *seen*, and do not allow yourself to be misled because your informant thinks she went in a certain direction. Those who know a little about the habits of the hare are least to be trusted: they think because under ordinary conditions she pursues a particular course, that she will do the same when hunted,—for this reason you must not be influenced by keepers. Always give an attentive ear to all information, but put your trust in your hounds and you will not be disappointed.

I do not think a young man can have a better

education for fox-hunting than to begin with a pack of foot-beagles. It not only teaches him the principles of hunting, but gives him a good idea of getting the shortest way to hounds. The few hints I have given may, I hope, be of service to the beginner, but experience aided by careful observation is the best tutor a man can have.

My little pack are only twelve and a half inches, but they have this season killed thirteen brace of hares out of fifty hunting days; so that when I plead for small hounds in a grass country, you will see that I do not ask you to undertake an impossible task.



CHAPTER XII

Stag-Hunting

In most parts of England two hundred years ago, both red and fallow deer were scattered fairly plentifully over the land. Every large owner of the soil preserved herds in his woods and parks, which wandered about where they listed, free from any except legitimate danger. Hounds were not then bound down to the pursuit of one animal, so that when a hunting-party failed to find the deer they sought, they were content to follow the hare or fox. The enclosing and cultivating of the land has changed all this, so that now the wild red deer has been driven to where man is seldom seen and his habitations are few. Amongst

the impossible hills of Scotland they always escaped extinction, and now that deer-stalking has become popular their numbers have again increased.

The fallow deer still run wild in the New Forest and afford there some very pretty sport with hounds. In England the wild red stag has found a home amongst the coombes and wooded valleys that surround Exmoor. Here the land-owners, assisted by loyal and sporting farmers, preserve them for the Devon and Somerset hounds to hunt. This pack is made up of drafts from foxhound kennels that have been parted with on account of size, and stand from twenty-five to twenty-six inches. A large hound is a necessity in going through the heather, but he must also be built on the right lines to stand the work over such a rough country, with perhaps a run of twenty miles and a like distance back to kennels.

Though Exmoor is a very beautiful country, it is not an ideal one to ride over or to follow hounds, for this reason, that they are more often than not out of sight, and your only chance is to ride for certain points. Were any one to attempt riding

straight he would soon get to the bottom of his horse, and probably get bogged at the finish. It is wonderful how those sportsmen who hunt regularly with this pack get about: they are very seldom out of a run.

Jumping fences is not one of the dangers you have to encounter, but there are many other things that will try the nerves of the boldest horseman, such as galloping down precipitous hills, crawling up steep banks, and going at top speed over the roughest ground. You are told that the horses are used to it and seldom fall, but as you are not used to it, this information does not give you much confidence. A good straight run over the moor is a thing to be remembered, and is an experience that any real sportsman will enjoy, but there are many disappointments in this form of hunting, and if you go down for two or three days you are more than likely to return with a very poor opinion of the celebrated wild stag-hunting.

To begin with, you may have great difficulty in separating a warrantable stag from the rest of the herd, and when that is accomplished he will very likely run only from one wood to another

and refuse to face the open. The fox-hunter, who looks upon the finding of the fox as half the business of his sport, does not take kindly to seeing two or three couple used only for that purpose, the rest of the pack being meanwhile shut up in the nearest farmhouse. The use of 'tufters,' as they are called, is, however, a necessity in driving the old stag from his companions, and to throw the whole pack into covert would mean the slaughter of calves and yearlings. It would be difficult to say exactly what would happen, but I imagine hounds would be split up into small parties, and it would be impossible to re-unite them when the right kind of stag went away.

The most important person is the harbourer, and on his skill the day's sport mainly depends. He must not only track the deer to the covert where it finally lies down to rest, but he must be able to know by its slot whether it is the right size and age. Unless the man is competent and well up to his work, you may perhaps spend the whole day in drawing for the animal you want. The harbourer's duties entail much labour and he has often to be out the whole night, so that those who have the management of hounds cannot be

expected to do that work. It seems to me, however, that those who are very keen about this sport and follow the staghounds regularly, ought to make themselves acquainted with the harbourer's art, and be able to read the signs of a footprint as easily as the letters on this page. For the thorough enjoyment of any sport a man should be familiar with every little detail affecting it, and the greater his knowledge the greater will be his pleasure.

Of course, the man like myself who goes down in the autumn for a day or two on Exmoor, and is not a regular follower of the hunt, cannot be expected to know anything ; but I think the man who styles himself a stag-hunter ought to be able to harbour a deer. It seems to me all part of the business—a most important item in that branch of venery, and, I should think, very interesting, though perhaps a trifle arduous. There is no technical detail that is beneath the notice and study of any one who loves the sport he pursues.

It is perhaps one of the greatest pleasures in hunting to find your way across-country and after hounds entirely dependent on your own resources

and skill. This is a pleasure, however, which I should advise the stranger on Exmoor to forgo, or he may find himself in some difficulty that might have been avoided had he availed himself of the pilotage of local talent. In any ordinary country you generally find that by following hounds and keeping close to them, you seldom come across a place which is beyond a horse's powers, but you must forget this old theory when you go stag-hunting on Exmoor.

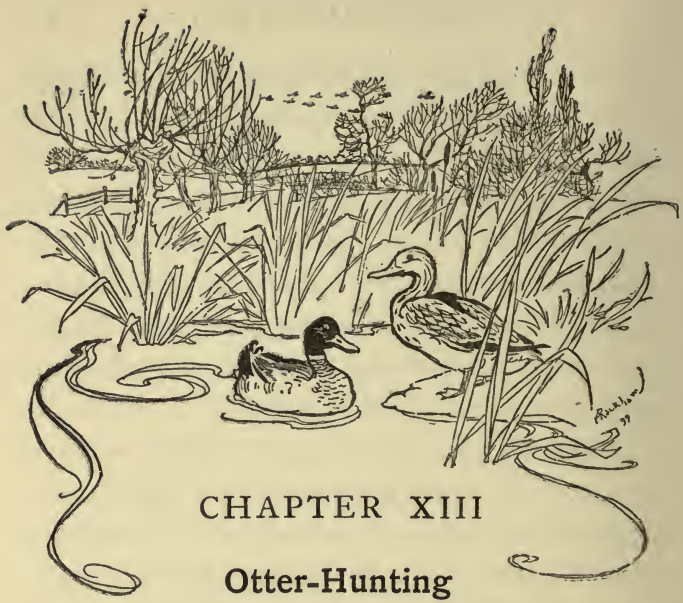
However keen you may be about fox-hunting, you will do well to spare a week at the end of August or beginning of September to pay the Devon and Somerset a visit. The two sports are so totally different that it would be absurd to compare them, but that stag-hunting is real sport in the true sense of the word, you will be obliged to admit when you have seen a stag found and then fairly hunted to death.

It is more or less the fashion to hunt with the Devon and Somerset in the autumn, which, of course, means a crowd with little room to watch hounds; but late in April the fields are generally small, and it is at that time of the year they often have the best sport.

The men of Devon are all good sportsmen and loyally preserve the stag, which will often do more damage in one night to crops than a fox will in a whole season amongst the hen-roosts. Hunting in this county is said to go on all the year round, either with the stag, the fox, the hare, or else the otter. The yeomen are not only keen about every form of hunting, but they understand it and appreciate the work of hounds.

In the New Forest the deer are just as wild, but not having the strength of the red variety they do not make such good points. They have excellent sport and occasionally some very good runs, but it is in the late spring, when fox-hunting is over, that this hunt becomes most popular and its doings chronicled far and wide. From the north and from the midlands sportsmen hurry down south, to hear once more the cry of hounds before the season is closed.

Hunting the carted stag is a very harmless amusement, and affords many people the opportunity of hearing the cry of hounds and riding across-country who cannot find time for the legitimate thing, but it is not sport, and is only a degree above the 'red herring.'



CHAPTER XIII

Otter-Hunting

THE greatest charm in this sport is the wildness and shyness of the otter. There is hardly a stream of any size in England in which he is not found, but unless hunted he is very seldom seen, and in consequence he is often close at hand without any one being aware of it. In the daytime he lies secure, coiled up in the centre of a hollow willow or on the ledge of a drain that perhaps has its mouth under water. At night he starts off on his fishing excursions, gliding silently into the water without disturbing a ripple on the surface,

and by sunrise next morning he may be resting himself at some other refuge in the next county. He is here to-day, gone to-morrow, and unless it be a bitch with cubs, no man can say where an otter is certain of being found.

In the hottest months of spring and autumn, when every other form of hunting is at an end, the pursuit of the otter is at its height. Both men and hounds can stand the constant immersions better in warm weather, and the only hardship then is that of early rising. There is a fascination in itself merely watching hounds work a stream, and even when they find nothing you feel yourself well repaid for turning out at daybreak. You are expecting hounds to hit a drag every minute, and who shall say that in the expectation is not more than half the pleasure? The ideal stream for an otter is a rippling brook or river, full of deeps and shallows, with overhanging banks that will conceal the entrance to his underground home. Here he wanders through the night for many miles, sometimes surprising a fat trout or eel, and then, taking a turn on land, will vary his repast with a succulent frog. As daylight approaches he hurries on to

some well-known holt in which he has ofttimes rested before, and of the locality of which he has a perfect recollection. He is the gypsy of the water, a wanderer without either house or home; but, like all rovers, he spends a happy life, and unless some river-keeper is watching the banks with a gun, he has little to fear from any except his legitimate enemies. His powerful jaw makes him a formidable opponent for any dog to tackle single-handed, and his tough jacket is not easily torn.

Nearly all packs of otter-hounds have a large proportion of foxhound blood mixed up with other breeds, and there are generally several who began life by hunting the fox, but have been drafted for age or other causes. These very soon enter, and are the keenest in driving an otter to his death.

The objection to putting in a young foxhound is that he is in rather too much of a hurry, has too much drive, and, when there is a good scent, he leads the hunt at such a pace that you very soon get left behind. The foxhound of seven or eight seasons has still plenty of good work left in him, and he will be as stout as ever, but age



A PURE OTTER-HOUND

will have made him slow, and he will soon find that at this new game he will be as good as the young, whereas of late in the other sport he had been obliged to take a back seat.

There is no more sensible animal than the foxhound—he loves every kind of sport, and will quickly adapt himself to altered circumstances. He takes readily to the water, and when once entered to the otter he can generally be depended on not to throw his tongue on the scent of a rat or waterhen. If he happens to cross the line of his old enemy the fox, he sometimes forgets himself, and there is always this danger to be thought of when an otter going from one stream to another enters a wood or covert. There are few packs that have not a strain of foxhound blood, and most masters like to have at least two or three couple to mix with the others.

The pure-bred otter-hound is generally of a tan colour, varying from light to dark, and occasionally showing patches of white, but when this occurs I think it is evidence of a cross at some period. He has a rough wiry coat, and the harder the texture of his hair, the better he will be able to withstand the effects of being continually in the

water. He has a deep voice with a bell-like tone, which makes one think it probable that he and the bloodhound had a common ancestor.

The otter-hound was formerly about sixteen inches and not very straight on the leg, but of great strength and endurance. In the last fifty years the standard has been raised gradually, and now there are few under twenty inches. The tall hound has this advantage, that except in deep pools he can wade whilst the smaller sort are swimming, and it is the swimming which tires them out. Were it not for this reason I think I should prefer a pack of strong sixteen-inch hounds, as you would then be able to keep up easily on foot.

I hope the pure otter-hound will not be allowed to disappear and become merged in a cross: it is doubtful what such a cross, however successful it might be at first, would eventually produce. There are many good qualities in the old otter-hound mixed up with not a few vices; but if breeders would give their attention to this material, with care and judicious selection they might in a few generations raise up a hound that would be far more satisfactory than any cross.

The greatest difficulty in breeding otter-hounds is that the time they are wanted for hunting is the time when the bitch would be suckling her puppies. Of course, if you can get them to whelp about January the pups will be weaned before hunting commences, but unfortunately this cannot often be managed. Few masters can spare their best bitches and those that are most reliable, which are the ones that should be bred from.

It is very important that the pack should be in good condition and have their feet thoroughly hardened. Being continually in the water and scrambling over sharp rocks tries their feet very severely, so that unless this has been attended to you will have lame hounds all the summer. Plenty of horse exercise on the roads for three months previous to the commencement of the season will put their feet right and lay on the muscle which will be wanted for continual swimming. The master who thinks, because otter-hounds are not required to do fast work, that it is unnecessary to give them a lengthy preparation, will have very indifferent sport.

There are some packs that have been in exist-

ence for a great many years, and nothing is omitted that will conduce to the welfare of the hounds; but there are other packs that change their masters at frequent intervals, and the management of these generally leave something to be desired. The money for this sport does not flow into the hunt's coffers quite as readily as in fox-hunting, and unless the master is a rich man he will have to economise to meet the bill for meal during a long winter of idleness. When possible, the hunt should always turn out well, but I should infinitely prefer to see a ragged huntsman to a ragged hound. Being always in the water, it is not easy to keep a gloss on their coats, but there is no reason they should not look muscular and healthy.

In the olden days the otter was hunted with hounds, but then it was not left entirely to the pack to kill him, and several of the party carried sharp spears with which they tried to impale him at every opportunity. We should consider this nowadays hardly a fair way of playing the game, but I imagine otters were more numerous then and a kill was a matter for rejoicing. At any rate it was a more sportsmanlike way of killing

him than shooting or trapping, and it seems to me it would not be a very easy matter to spear an otter in the water. Before the advent of railways, which bring the spoils from the sea freshly caught to the most inland home, the coarse fish as well as the trout of our brooks and rivers were a very important item in the daily bill of fare. Hence it is not surprising that a gentleman like the otter, who helped himself to the choicest specimens in the water, should be looked upon as a common thief. I do not think, however, he does quite as much damage as some people would have us believe, and a stream must indeed be badly stocked that cannot spare an occasional fish. I believe he is particularly fond of an eel, and in that case he deserves the thanks of the fish-preserver, as there is no greater enemy to either fry or spawn. Whatever his delinquencies may be, I think the otter should be considered sacred on the streams where he is hunted with hounds, and those in authority should give orders to the keepers to spare his life.

The greatest objection I have to otter-hunting is that you have to get up at such a horribly

early hour. I know some packs fix their meets as late as ten or eleven, but by doing this you miss the best part of the sport. An otter leaves a very strong scent, but when it is several hours old it must be considerably weakened, and therefore, the sooner you can get on it the better. You ought to be on the banks of the stream you intend to hunt soon after sunrise, and the warmer the weather the earlier you should start. I need hardly tell you that whenever possible you should work up-stream. Directly you hit a drag, you should send some one on ahead who knows the marks of an otter to find out which way he is travelling, or otherwise you may run the heelway for several miles before you discover your mistake. This running the drag, which will sometimes take you across meadows and over hills, is, as I have said, the best part of the sport. To my mind it is very poor fun drawing up a stream until you come to a holt where an otter is lying up, and after putting him down to surround him so that he has no chance of escape. Unless your hounds are out of blood or you have already been hunting for several hours, the pack should be drawn off whilst the work of eviction is going on;

and though it is perfectly fair to stop him going down-stream, you should give him every opportunity of going up, and also give him a fair start before laying hounds on.

On streams that otters frequent, but which have few holts to tempt them to stop, it is a good plan to make artificial drains. The drain should slope upward from the river and the den should be well above high-water mark, so that an otter can be certain of lying dry. I do not know what is considered the best plan for a drain of this description, but I should think the horse-shoe shape with one entrance above water and one below. These drains should only be built where they are safe from disturbance either by stray dogs or too inquisitive human beings. The otter is shy of being seen, and it is very seldom an old dog will venture abroad in daylight, though a bitch suckling cubs does sometimes run this risk. The taint of hounds on a stream is sufficient to drive him elsewhere for a fortnight, and if he finds the fishing good in his new quarters he is more than likely to remain there for the rest of the season.

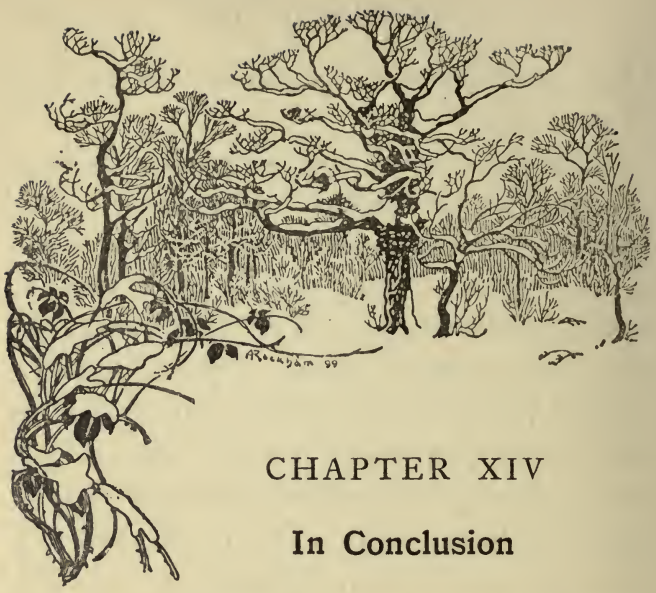
This sport, I think, offers more opportunities

for a display of craft and resource than any other form of hunting. In every chase the first rule is to acquire a knowledge of the habits of the animal you hunt, and the more obscure the ways of the creature, the greater the interest in finding them out. Very little is known of the otter, and I do not think any one has even yet fixed the time they go with young. Like all other animals, the spring is the natural breeding season, but I believe cubs have been found at all periods of the year. I do not know whether it has ever been tried to breed them in captivity, but I see no reason why it should not be successful.

No man should attempt to hunt otter-hounds who is not blessed with a good constitution, for being continually in the water will try him very severely, and though he may expect warm weather in the summer, there will often be days when an east wind will make it as cold as winter. The huntsman and whips should always arrange to have a change of clothes somewhere handy when any distance from home. Youth is generally careless about these details, but it generally has to pay for it in the end, and to be laid on the shelf with rheumatic fever in the prime of

life is annoying to a sportsman with his love of exercise.

In deep rivers and sluggish streams the otter can laugh at his enemies the hounds, as unless there are frequent shallows they have no chance of catching him. These places, I think, keep the smaller brooks stocked, and will prevent the otter from ever becoming extinct. He has, however, rather a fancy for the shallow streams, where he finds it easier to surprise the fish than in deep water. Though he catches many other sorts of fish, I think he prefers a trout, and when they retreat up small brooks to spawn he generally follows them. Therefore, if you wish to encourage otters on a river, stock well with trout.



CHAPTER XIV

In Conclusion

THERE is a last word I have to say which ought to have been first, and that is about subscribing to the hunt you patronise.

Before you buy your horses, order your clothes, or decide on the size of your hunting-box, you ought to set aside a sum of money for subscriptions, and not only set it aside, but send it to the secretary ere you appear with the hounds. You ought not to require a reminder that your subscription is due, but should find out the proper person and send it him at once. Whatever you may give, the master is nearly certain to have to

bear a large share of the expenses, so that you need not be afraid of giving too much. The usual question asked is, 'What is the least I can send?' but instead of asking any one that question you should ask yourself, 'How much can I give?'

A custom has grown up of sending in subscriptions at Christmas or afterwards, and then, if you leave before that time, it is very likely you will forget to send anything. You had no intention of behaving shabbily, and your tradesmen gave you no excuse for forgetting them; but because the hunt secretary did not like to dun you, some one else has to make good your share of the expenses. By paying at the beginning of the season you avoid the possibility of doing anything of this kind, and you will save the hunt official much trouble. Personally I think it would be a good plan if every one paid a regular recognised subscription at the beginning of the season, and then at the end they might add something more from the fulness of heart if they were satisfied with the sport they had seen, and felt disposed to be generous. Every one must see that it is impossible for a master to make rules

that are binding on his field, and therefore I think it should be a point of honour to send a subscription without being asked for it. The careless and extravagant have all the desire to send a handsome subscription in March or later, but when that month arrives the expenses of housekeeping have swallowed up the year's allowance, and the hunt must then go without. That imaginary beginner whom I have been addressing all through this volume will, I am sure, take this last piece of advice to heart, and will not appear at the covert-side until his own subscription has been paid.

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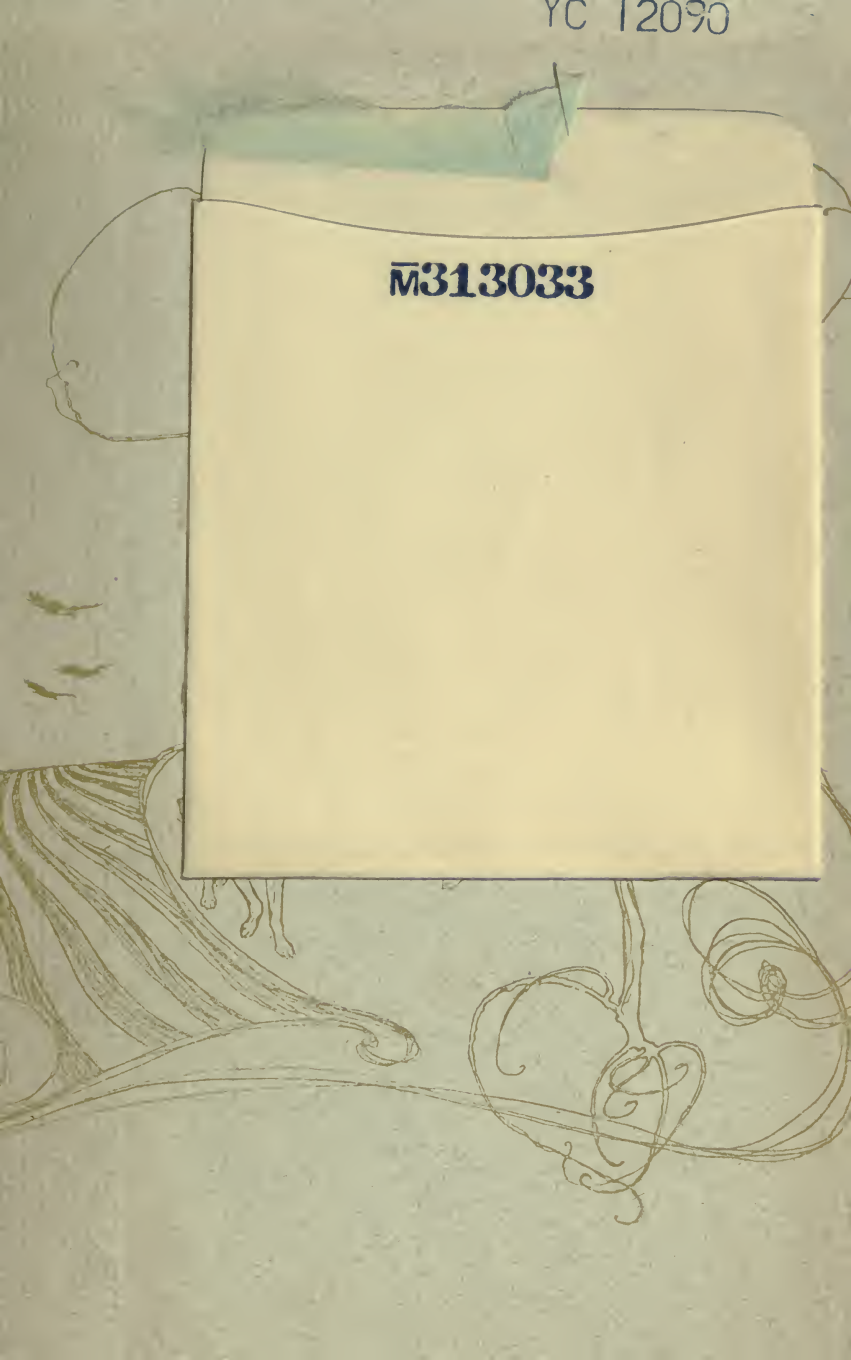
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